

## Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 73

### Perennials for a Shade Garden

When choosing perennials, you should always consider their light requirements. Some plants love the shade while others long for the sun. The following plants will thrive in the shady nooks and corners of southern Ontario, filling them with flowers and foliage:

#### Perennials for Flowers

With a little sun, *Aconitum*, monkshood, can be a beautiful autumn plant. In rich, moist, well-drained soil, it grows tall spikes of violet or white flowers, sometimes reaching six feet in height.

*Astilbe* is an excellent choice for damp areas and loves to be planted by shady streams, where its purple, red, pink, or white plumes can rise up to 3½' high.

Bleeding hearts, or *Dicentra spectabilis*, are favorites for their sprays of dangling flowers, but why not try the wild bleeding hearts, *Dicentra eximia*? They're smaller, but they tolerate deeper shade, have beautiful, fern-like foliage, and bloom all summer.

Primroses, or primulas, can add a splash of colour to partially shaded gardens. Just make sure they don't dry out.

Finally, consider some other classics, such as violets, columbines or Jacob's ladder. They all bloom well in light shade.

#### Perennials for Foliage

Wild ginger, *Asarum europaeum*, is grown for its glossy, heart-shaped, evergreen leaves, which hide maroon flowers. Ginger grows best where the soil is rich and constantly moist.

Hostas are some of the most popular shade plants. With their clumps of oval or heart-shaped leaves, they add lushness to

shady corners, but watch out for slugs, and make sure your soil is well drained.

Ferns are another favorite for shade gardens. These plants have lovely, feathery foliage and spread rapidly in a rich, moist soil.

#### Perennials for Ground Cover

Bugleweed, *Ajuga*, spreads through partial shade with short spikes of blue flowers in late spring and summer.

*Convallaria majalis*, or lily-of-the-valley, is a favorite for its fragrant, nodding, white flowers. Plant it in rich, well-drained, moist soil, and watch for its flowers in late spring.

Sweet woodruff, *Galium odoratum*, growing up to a foot tall, spreads rapidly in partial shade if the soil is moist and well drained. Its sweet clusters of white flowers rise above whorls of fine, green leaves.

*Pachysandra*, or Japanese spurge, spreads its whorls of glossy evergreen leaves through full sunlight or deep shade, with creamy white flowers in the spring.

Lastly, periwinkle, *Vinca major* or *V. minor*, a low evergreen, spreads quickly, opening lavender-blue flowers above green or variegated leaves, even in deep shade.

#### Perennial Care

Whichever perennials you choose, keep their needs in mind. Plant them in a suitable soil, water them well and consider mulching. Finally, if a plant isn't doing well in one spot, try another, or another. There are no mistakes in gardening.

Meg Wyatt, Class of 2005

#### Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery

Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus, 135 Taylor Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0  
phone: (905) 641-2252, ext. 4082; fax: (905) 988-4307 e-mail: mnewell@niagaracollege.ca  
Website: <http://greenhousenursery.niagaracollege.ca>