

DRY SHADE MADE BEAUTIFUL

TAUNTON'S

# fine Gardening

## 12 inspired PLANTING PLANS

**EXPERT ADVICE:**  
Plants worth  
the money

**Explore your  
EDGING OPTIONS**

**EPIMEDIUMS:**  
Tough, showy  
shade plants





## Dry shade doesn't have to ruin the party

True, dry shade might be the hardest set of conditions to find plants for. A great many interesting options do exist—including some plants you might be familiar with but just didn't know were candidates for the dreaded dry shade. Here are a few of my favorites.



**Golden lamium**  
(*Lamium maculatum* 'Aureum')

**ZONES:** 3–9

**SIZE:** 6 to 8 inches tall and 18 to 24 inches wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Europe, Asia, Africa

This is one of the great “mixer plants.” The sweet pointed leaves sport yellow variegation, with the stems spreading gently along the ground. The snapdragon-like flowers appear in late spring and continue to bloom through frost.



**'Jack Frost' brunnera**  
(*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost')

**ZONES:** 3–8

**SIZE:** 12 to 18 inches tall and wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Europe, Asia

This is truly an amazing plant. It continues to give and give, with starry blue forget-me-not flowers in spring and brilliantly silver variegated leaves that really shine in the deepest shade. In spots with mild winters, it can be evergreen.



**'Big Blue' lily turf**  
(*Liriope* 'Big Blue')

**ZONES:** 5–10

**SIZE:** 14 inches tall and wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Asia

This grassy perennial is good for retaining soil at the edge of plantings or mixing into lower ground covers. Spikes of blue flowers with a fine texture will finish with berries on the stems in fall.



**'Ann Folkard' geranium**  
(*Geranium* 'Ann Folkard')

**ZONES:** 5–8

**SIZE:** 12 to 18 inches tall and 24 inches wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Europe

The beautiful yellow-green leaves of this plant look like jagged maple leaves spread out along red stems. It crawls amid other plants without killing them. Brilliant purple-red flowers with heavy veining appear throughout summer and into fall.



**Taiwan mondo grass**  
(*Ophiopogon formosanus*)

**ZONES:** 7–9

**SIZE:** 4 to 6 inches tall and 2 to 3 feet wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Asia

A gentle unassuming mondo grass that grows happily without much attention, this is a slow spreader. In spring it blooms like crazy, with spikes of white flowers coming up through the foliage. Small blue berries appear in fall and are eaten by many overwintering birds.



**Autumn fern**  
(*Dryopteris erythrosora*)

**ZONES:** 5–8

**SIZE:** 18 to 24 inches tall and wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Eastern Asia

This fabulous fern has such amazing color that from a distance it looks like sweeps of astilbe (*Astilbe* spp. and cvs., Zones 4–9). The upright fronds start out copper-colored before turning to brilliant yellow-gold. Pores on the back of the fronds are bright red, adding another dimension of color. It's evergreen in most zones.



**Black Scallop bugleweed**  
(*Ajuga reptans* 'Binblasca')

**ZONES:** 4–9

**SIZE:** 3 to 6 inches tall and 24 inches wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** Europe, Asia, Africa

Bugleweed has a bad rap. Sometimes it escapes and goes where it isn't wanted. However, the bigger scale of this variety gives it great structure and makes it easier to control. The large runners can be easily pulled out to keep it in check. Pollinators love its fragrant purple-blue flowers.



**Crimson Fans mukdenia**  
(*Mukdenia rossii* 'Karasuba')

**ZONES:** 4–8

**SIZE:** 8 to 10 inches tall and 18 inches wide

**NATIVE RANGE:** China, Korea

I think this plant is most beautiful when sited on the edges of pathways. It would be more vigorous with more water, but it still grows well with considerably less moisture (a layer of mulch is a good idea). The leaves are colorful year-round and impossibly shiny.



## They fixed what made sedum boring

'Boogie Woogie' sedum (*Sedum* 'Boogie Woogie')

ZONES: 3–9

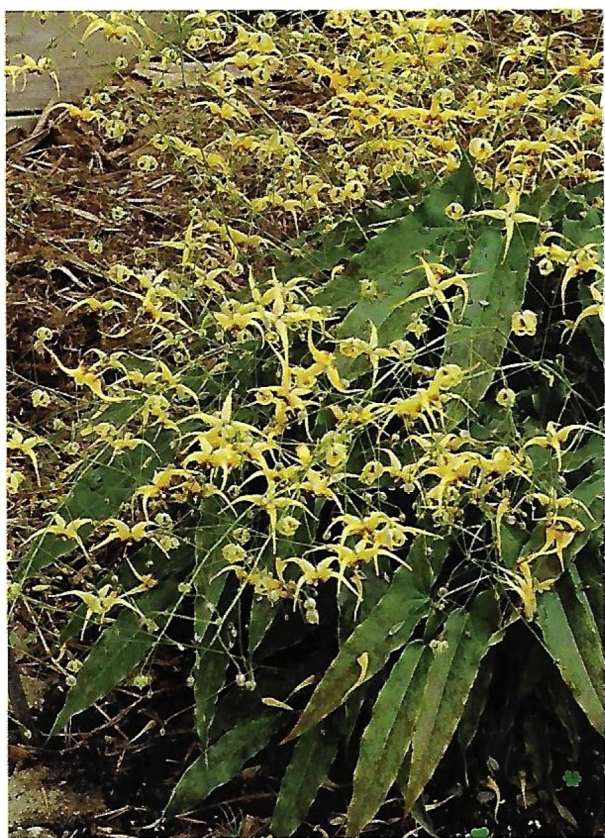
SIZE: 8 inches tall and 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil

NATIVE RANGE: Hybrid

Yes, sedums are tough-as-nails, drought-resistant plants. And yes, they have long-lasting blooms that bees adore. But the foliage has never been all that exciting. The variegation on 'Boogie Woogie', however, makes us want to get up and dance. In case you're worried that this trait might affect the hardiness (we were concerned, as well), this plant has persisted through two New England seasons here at *Fine Gardening*, with flying colors.

INTRODUCED BY *Proven Winners*® and *Walter's Gardens*



## A novel color for an evergreen treasure

'Caramel' epimedium (*Epimedium* 'Caramel')

ZONES: 5–8

SIZE: 12 inches tall and 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Partial to full shade; well-drained soil

NATIVE RANGE: Hybrid

This epimedium has what all epimediums have: drought tolerance, disease and deer resistance, and the ability to stick around all year. What's different about 'Caramel' is the unique blossom color. Some describe it as yellow with a reddish-brown center; some say it resembles a mochachino more in hue. However you describe it, it's still stunning. This guy tends to have more blossoms in early spring as well.

INTRODUCED BY *Plant Delights Nursery*



## Give your shade a punch of color with this beauty

'Peach Tea' heucherella (*Heucherella* 'Peach Tea')

ZONES: 4–9

SIZE: 12 inches tall and 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Partial to full shade; moist, well-drained soil

NATIVE RANGE: Hybrid

Heucherellas tend to be more vigorous than heucheras and more compact than tiarellas—basically giving you the best of both genera. 'Peach Tea' carries on that tradition and adds a new color profile. The large lobed leaves are a pink-rust color and set the stage for late spring, white bottlebrush flowers. The color is a new hue, not often found in the shade, but we can imagine it looking divine when paired with a Japanese painted fern.

INTRODUCED BY *Terra Nova*® Nurseries





**Nope, it's not a lobelia—  
it's better**

Quartz® Red penstemon (*Penstemon*  
'Balquered')

**ZONES:** 6–9

**SIZE:** 2 feet tall and wide

**CONDITIONS:** Full sun; moist, well-drained soil

**NATIVE RANGE:** Hybrid

If you've always wanted to grow the moisture-loving red lobelia but have drier conditions with more sun, this is your lucky day. Quartz® Red penstemon brings a novel color to the penstemon world, with its garnet-hued blooms. The long, tubular flowers show up all summer long, much to the delight of hummingbirds, and the lush green foliage is highly mildew resistant.

INTRODUCED BY Darwin Perennials



**It's a textural—and colorful—wonder for shade**

'Crested Surf' painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* 'Crested Surf')

**ZONES:** 5–9

**SIZE:** 20 to 22 inches tall and 28 to 30 inches wide

**CONDITIONS:** Partial to full shade; moist, well-drained soil

**NATIVE RANGE:** Eastern Asia

Color, texture, shade tolerance—what's not to love? 'Crested Surf' is a new breed of painted fern, with intense purple-silver-green fronds that sport adorable tassels at the tips. It really does look like a crop of baby ferns dangling off the ends. This is another plant that the FG staff got to experiment with for a season, and despite our best efforts to kill it, it persevered. If that's not a selling point, we don't know what is.

INTRODUCED BY Proven Winners® and Walter's Gardens

**A geum that's  
long-bloomed and  
space conscious**

Tempo™ Rose geum (*Geum* 'TNGEUTR')

**ZONES:** 5–9

**SIZE:** 20 inches tall and  
12 inches wide

**CONDITIONS:** Partial shade;  
moist, well-drained soil

**NATIVE RANGE:** Japan

Geums are another group of perennials that deserve more love. Their one drawback had been a sometimes rangy habit, but new offerings such as Tempo™ Rose are cute and compact. The salmon, red-centered blossoms appear in midspring and last for several weeks. And the fuzzy foliage makes Tempo™ Rose quite deer resistant.

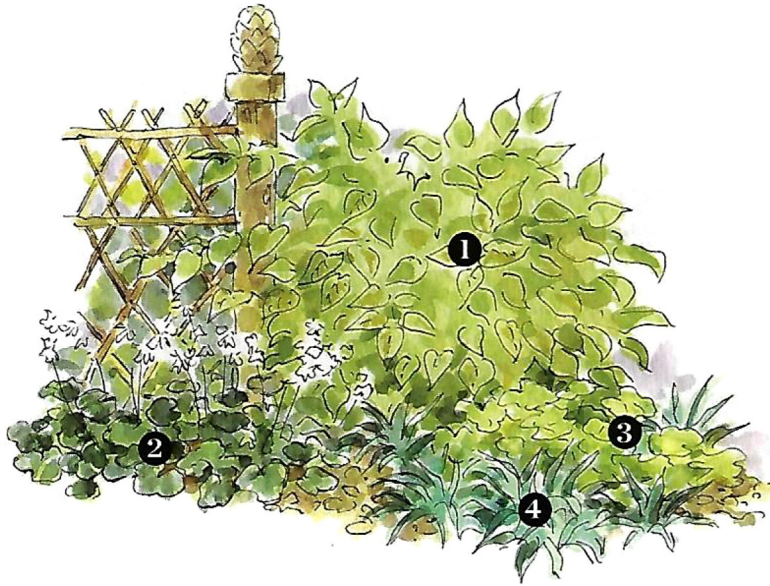


INTRODUCED BY Terra Nova® Nurseries





# SOUTHEAST



## 1. 'Sun King' aralia • *Aralia cordata* 'Sun King'

**ZONES:** 4–8

**SIZE:** 3 to 6 feet tall and wide

**CONDITIONS:** Partial shade; moist, fertile, well-drained soil

**NATIVE RANGE:** Japan, Korea, east-central China

This aralia is a winner all season long, but especially in late spring and early summer. From the time it emerges in midspring, its foliage will light up any shady vignette. Good structure and foliage presentation make this plant a wonderful backdrop or centerpiece. Its leaves will have a more golden color if they get a few hours of sun each day, and they will be greener in deeper shade. I have never had any insect or disease problems with it, and as a bonus, the deer in this area leave it alone.

## 2. Strawberry begonia • *Saxifraga stolonifera*

**ZONES:** 3–7

**SIZE:** 3 to 4 feet tall and wide

**CONDITIONS:** Full sun to partial shade; average soil but tolerates alkaline and clay

**NATIVE RANGE:** China, Japan, South Korea

This wonderful evergreen ground cover is much more hardy than people realize. It flourishes in shade, although morning sun will bring out more red coloring in its leaves. In May and June, white flowers emerge on 18-inch branched scapes, giving the plant a very light and airy look. I have never had any insect or disease problems with it as long as the soil was well drained but moist. It propagates easily from offsets and runners; that's good news, because you will want more.

## 3. 'Citronelle' heuchera • *Heuchera* 'Citronelle'

**ZONES:** 4–8

**SIZE:** 12 to 15 inches tall and 12 to 18 inches wide

**CONDITIONS:** Partial shade with protection from hot afternoon sun; organically rich, well-drained soil

**NATIVE RANGE:** North America

This heuchera echoes the color of 'Sun King' aralia but in a much smaller package. It is a low-maintenance plant that performs well all season, and it looks especially good in early summer with the emergence of fresh, lime-green leaves. If it is given more sun, it prefers even moisture to prevent leaf scorch. Its airy flowers appear in June. I have observed no insect or disease problems in the time that I have been growing 'Citronelle', but deer will graze it.

## 4. Japanese sacred lily • *Rohdea japonica*

**ZONES:** 6–10

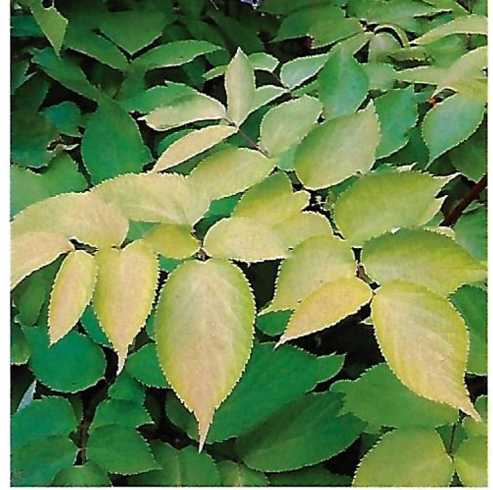
**SIZE:** 12 to 18 inches tall and wide

**CONDITIONS:** Partial to full shade; organically rich, well-drained soil

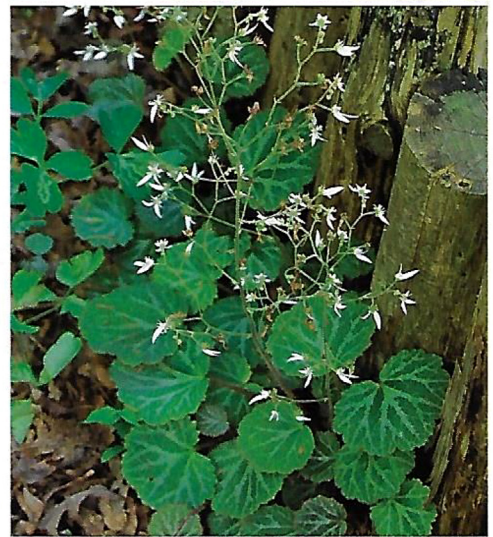
**NATIVE RANGE:** China, Japan, Korea

Japanese sacred lily is a stellar performer in the shade garden, producing great evergreen foliage throughout the year. It is drought tolerant when established, has no real insect or disease problems if its needs are met, and is not liked by deer. There are a number of variegated forms on the market, but all of them are slow growing, some painfully so. Although its flowers are inconspicuous, they are followed by clusters of red berries late in the season.

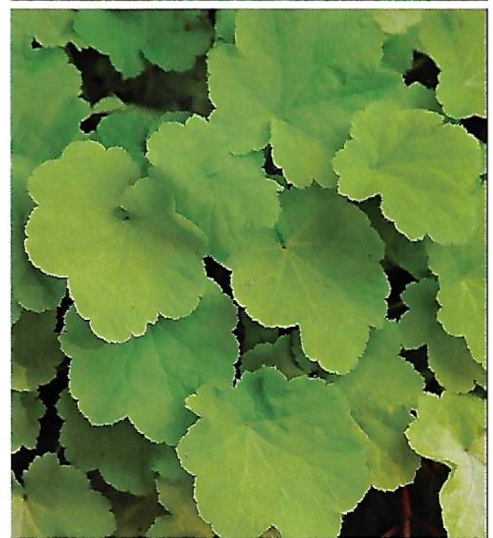
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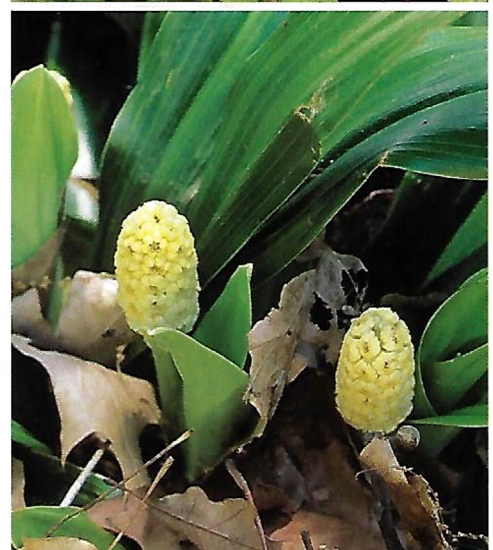
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