

Zone 4 Perennials for Shady Areas (Compiled by Kim Watson)



Astilbe (Astilbe hybrids)

The feathery plumes of astilbe hybrids weave textural color into shade plantings. Look for varieties that unfurl flowers in red, pink, white or lavender. Astilbe blooms in summer. By planting a mix of early-, mid- and late-flowering types, you can savor season-long color. Plants are deer-resistant. Mass them for an easy-care groundcover. Hardy in Zones 4 to 8.

Toad Lily

(*Tricyrtis hirta* 'Miyazaki')

Spotted orchid-like blooms appear late summer to early fall. Tuck toad lily into part to full shade, but reserve it for places you can view the blooms up close. Flowers are small enough that the plants can be lost in a large border. The 'Miyazaki' hybrids' don't spread aggressively like some toad lilies do. Hardy in Zones 4 to 8.





**'Sweet Kate' Spiderwort
(Tradescantia 'Sweet Kate')**

Chartreuse leaves and violet blossoms make a striking pair in part shade. The gold foliage turns on the light in shady gardens. Plants flower from spring to fall frost. Also look for spiderworts that open white or pink blossoms. To keep this low-care perennial in tip-top shape, cut plants back to soil level to encourage fresh growth. Hardy in Zones 3 to 10.

**Lenten Rose
(Helleborus orientalis)**

Kick off the garden season with the very early flowers of Lenten rose. Rose-like blooms open beneath leathery leaves in late winter and early spring. The evergreen leaves are deer-resistant and provide a deep green presence through winter. Look for hybrids that open flowers in every hue imaginable, including deep purple-black, pale pink and chartreuse. Hardy in zones 4 to 10.





**'Jack Frost' Heart-leaf
Brunnera
(*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack
Frost')**

Tiny blue-purple blooms appear in spring above the variegated leaves of 'Jack Frost' heart-leaf brunnera. The flowers complement the silvery leaves beautifully. This perennial adds striking color to gardens in part shade. Fuzzy leaves are slug- and deer-resistant. Hardy in Zones 3 to 10.

**Bluebird' Columbine
(*Aquilegia* 'Bluebird')**

'Bluebird' columbine is a hybrid of the native wildflower. The flowers on this hybrid face up and have long spurs. Columbine is a hummingbird favorite, while deer and rabbits leave it alone. Give it a spot in partial shade or in a woodland garden with soil rich in organic matter. Hardy in Zones 3 to 9.





Hosta (Hosta)

Most gardeners choose shade-loving hostas for their colorful leaves, but many of these leafy beauties also offer eye-catching flower spikes. *Hosta plantaginea* and its hybrids open fragrant flowers that can perfume a summer evening. Give hostas soil enriched with organic matter in part to full shade. Hardy in Zones 3 to 9.

Bressingham Purple Jacob's Ladder (Polemonium 'Polbress')

Jacob's ladder brings fine-textured beauty to shade garden plantings. This perennial is native to North America and typically found in part to full shade settings. Light blue, white or deep purple blossoms open in spring. The common name refers to the fact that leaves are arranged along stems like rungs on a ladder. Look for variegated leaf hybrids for color after flowers fade. Plants are hardy in Zones 3 to 8.



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