



viridis

---

Specialists in sourcing and supplying high quality plants  
for garden designers, landscapers and architects

---

# Plants for Purpose

## Colour for Shade

When designing planting schemes for shady areas our first recourse is to consider the structure of our native woodland flora. Texture is naturally created by the contrasting leaf forms and subtle variations in the colour green as the plants focus on maximising their photosynthetic abilities. Colour generally arrives in short bursts. The flower colours that work best in the shade are whites, pale blues and pinks and colour can also be introduced using leaf variegation and stem colour as can be seen in these plant suggestions.

### The Right Plant!

As part of the design process you will have identified areas of the garden that fall within shade. This might be from existing or proposed buildings or from natural features such as trees or tall hedges. The structure and water holding capacity of the soil within these areas will also inform your choice of planting. Whilst soil improvement and the removal of overhanging growth to increase light levels might be an option, it is better to consider which plants have evolved to thrive in the conditions that are present. This will help with successful plant establishment and result in a more stable plant community with less ongoing maintenance as the garden matures.

*Polygonatum multiflorum*



*Epimedium x youngianum 'Niveum'*



### The Whites

The wonderful Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum multiflorum* is a close relative of another spring beauty, Lily of the Valley and bears clusters of drooping white bells on long arching stems. Growing to 50-80cm and flowering in May, it is a native of dry, limestone woodlands and bring an instant elegance to drier shady areas. Fun fact *Polygonatum* means 'many knees' and refer to the thick jointed underground rhizomes. Plant it with another dry shade stalwart *Epimedium x youngianum 'Niveum'* for dancing starry flowers in early summer and finish off the season with the *Aster divaricatus* tumbling around on narrow black stems all through September.

If your conditions are more damp than dry, look to *Tiarella cordifolia* for its mass of creamy white flower spikes in early summer which will interlink the taller plants within the border. Moist, humus rich soils in partial shade are the best conditions for the outstanding *Anemone x hybrida 'Honorine Jobert'* whose pure, single, white flowers will gracefully light up the shady border well into autumn.

# Plants for Purpose

## Colour for Shade

*Brunnera macrophylla*



### The Blues

Think blue, think Boraginacea or more familiarly, think the Borage family. Many of our favourite garden plants are members of this family and many of these are happy growing in shaded and semi shaded conditions. Top of the list for dry shade has to be *Brunnera macrophylla*, or the perennial forget-me-not. The clue is in the name, bright clear blue forget-me-not flowers in late spring, held aloft over clumps of large bristly heart shaped leaves. Always deadhead once flowering has finished to keep the leaves looking fresh and green.

When choosing cultivars of *Pulmonaria officinalis* for your shady border, bear in mind the simple rule that the more silver colouring that is present on the leaves, the more suitable it is for dry conditions. Hence, the deep blue flowered 'Blue Ensign' with its dark green leaves is more suited to damp shade than some of its silver spotted cousins.

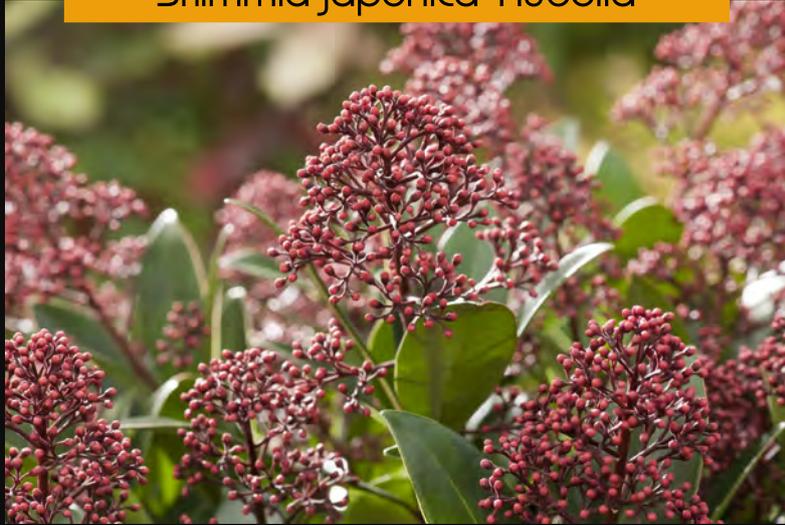
One shade loving plant member of this happy family that should be treated with some degree of caution is the inappropriately named green alkanet or *Pentaglottis sepervirens*. Again, it has the typical bristly leaves and stems with the pretty bright blue flowers in early summer but it is such a prolific self seeder that you may regret introducing it to your garden.

If it's ground cover, in shade that you are looking for, our final blue offering is dwarf comfrey or *Symphytum 'Hidcote Blue'*. Tough, reliable and almost impossible to eradicate once established this plant is smothered in blue and white tubular bells in late spring and early summer and is a magnet for hungry bees.

# Plants for Purpose

## Colour for Shade

*Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella'



### The Pinks

For a touch of old fashioned glamour consider one of the roses which are happy tumbling around in a semi shaded border. One of these is *Rosa* 'Charles de Mills' and has upright arching growth and opulent, fragrant, magenta red flowers. It can be matched both with tree peonies *Paeonia suffruticosa* and with herbaceous peonies and will flower more steadily without the pressure of direct sunlight which can force the flowers over. Away from the indulgences of early summer and focusing on those months where colour might be in short supply. *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' will delight with its warm pink flowers set above red margined deep green leaves. The dark red flower buds are produced in autumn and provide interest all through the winter until the flowers open in spring. This plant is particular in its preference for shade as direct sun can cause the leaves to turn yellow, it also prefers neutral to acidic soils so make sure you mulch regularly with composted bark, leaf mould or well-rotted manure

*Paeonia suffruticosa*



# Plants for Purpose

## Colour for Shade

Heuchera "Palace Purple"



### Leaf Colour

For a touch of moody drama the striking, burgundy leaves of *Heuchera villosa* 'Palace Purple' will persist over winter and will be followed by fresh, shiny growth in spring. The flowers are light and frothy white stars held over the leaves by wiry dark stems and followed by rosy bronze seed pods. Think about pairing it with *Ophiopogon*, *Hosta* and *Tricyrtis* for an exotic effect. *Heuchera* prefers a damper soil and so does *Hakonechloa macra* the Japanese forest grass. This is a deciduous, eye catching ornamental with a flowing habit that looks wonderful planted both, en masse as ground cover or as part of a mixed woodland border. The fronds can be left over winter where they will provide a papery, rustling texture and then can be cut back hard in early spring as the new growth emerges.

The *Euphorbia* genus is the sixth largest genus in the plant kingdom and has over 2000 individual species. One of these, *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* is a compact, shade loving individual that tolerates dry soils so is perfect for planting under trees. It has lime-green flowers which unfurl in spring, contrast pleasingly with the darker rosettes of glossy green leaves below and last for months. Left unchecked it can become invasive in small gardens but it does make an attractive ground cover.

# Plants for Purpose

## Colour for Shade

### Stems

All of the *Acteas* thrive in shade and *Actea simplex* 'Brunette' has wonderful dark brown, stems with creamy white small flowers in late summer which look stunning over the bronzy foliage below. They belong to the buttercup family so are partial to damp soil although dislike boggy conditions. They also do less well in very alkaline conditions so won't thrive in chalky soils.

*Actea simplex* 'Brunette'



# Colour for Shade and Semi-Shade

Viridis can supply a broad range of quality, cost-effective planting options.

The below list is an outline of plant recommendations for adding colour to areas in shade and semi-shade.

## Trees

*Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum'  
*Cornus kousa*  
*Ilex aquifolium argentea marginata*  
*Cercis Canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'  
*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*  
*Parrotia persica*

## Climbers

*Lonicera periclymenum*  
*Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*  
*Rosa Alberic Barbier*  
*Rosa Albertine*  
*Trachelospermum jasminoides*

## Shrubs

*Cornus controversa*  
*Liquidambar styraciflua*  
*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*  
*Skimmia confusa* 'Kew Green'  
*Camellia japonica*  
*Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'  
*Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group

## Ferns

*Athyrium niponicum* f. *metallicum*  
*Dryopteris erythrosora*  
*Dryopteris affinis*  
*Dryopteris wallichiana* 'Jurassic Gold'  
*Matteuccia struthiopteris*  
*Athyrium niponicum* f. *metallicum*

## Herbaceous Perennials

*Brunnera macrophylla*  
*Chelone obliqua*  
*Aster divaricatus*  
*Geranium nodosum*  
*Geranium phaeum*  
*Geranium sylvaticum*  
*Pulmonaria* 'Blue Ensign'  
*Polygonatum multiflorum*  
*Hosta* sp.  
*Tellima grandiflora*  
*Actea simplex*  
*Amsonia tabernaemontana*  
*Dicentra formosa*  
*Digitalis purpurea* 'albiflora'  
*Lamium orvala*  
*Phlox divaricata* 'Clouds of Perfume'  
*Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group

## Grasses

*Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau'  
*Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold'  
*Hakonechloa macra* 'Albovariegata'  
*Millium effusum* 'Aureum'  
*Imperata cylindrical* 'Rubra'

## Bulbs

*Nectaroscordum siculum*  
*Convallaria majalis*  
*Anemone nemorosa*  
*Hyacinthoides non scripta*  
*Eranthis heymalis*  
*Galanthus nivalis*