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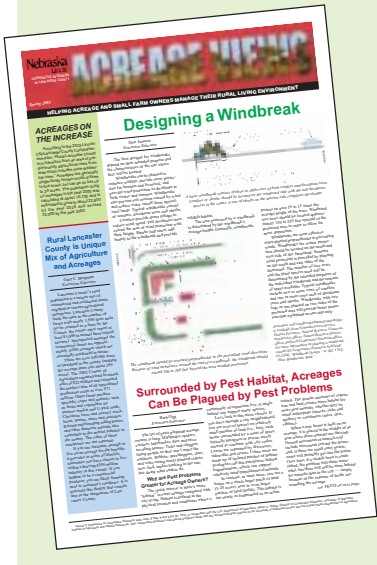
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**SPECIAL INSERT:
ACREAGE VIEWS**
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Successful Shade Gardening

Key is Proper Plant Choice, Care

Don Janssen
Extension Educator

An abundance of large trees and shady areas in your yard can be a challenge to the creative gardener, rather than an obstacle to good gardening. Shady places that provide cool, refreshing areas of beauty during summer's heat also can contribute color and interest to the landscape throughout the growing season.

Gardening in the shade doesn't have to be frustrating. Some plants will tolerate relatively low light, and a few actually thrive in it. You can choose from an array of flowering annuals, perennials, bulbs and woodland plants for color. Many groundcovers do well in problem areas. In light shade, you might even be able to grow a few herbs or leafy vegetables. The trick is to know which plants are most likely to succeed and then to give them the kind of care that will improve their chances. You also have to be willing to experiment a bit to find which plants grow best on your property.

First, assess how much light the plants will actually receive. Densely shaded areas beneath large trees or under the overhang of a building, present more problems than do situations of partial or light shade. Although partially- or lightly-shaded areas receive direct sunlight for only a small portion of the day, light intensity is still quite bright. There are numerous plant choices you can make in these locations.

Light is not the only major concern when gardening in shady areas. Frequently, inadequate moisture can be a problem. The thick canopy of a large tree or the overhang of a house, will act as an umbrella, deflecting rainfall away from the ground directly beneath it. Worse yet, trees and shrubs will

compete with smaller plants for every drop of moisture that reaches the ground. It is vital that plants growing in the shade of large trees and shrubs, or sheltered by your home or garage, be watered regularly even during times of seemingly adequate rainfall.

Soil fertility also can be a source of trouble. Trees and shrubs fill the soil with feeder roots that greedily use up nutrients as readily as they are applied. It often seems that the more you water and fertilize, the more roots with which you have to contend. Yet adequate fertility is an absolute must for all your plants because without it, they are bound to be small and their growth will be weak. In most cases, a spring application of a balanced fertilizer, followed by one or two applications as the season progresses, will help your shade plants survive the competition of tree and shrub roots. If root competition is a serious problem, planting in containers above ground is a viable alternative. Containers should be replanted each spring with annuals, since bulbs or perennials cannot be expected to survive winter's cold.

With few exceptions shade-tolerant plants will do best in well-drained, relatively fertile soil. Both sandy soils and heavy, clay like soils will benefit from the incorporation of organic matter such as peat moss, compost, or well-rotted manure. Such materials are particularly helpful in areas of hard, compacted soils.

Annuals

Which plants will be the showiest in a shady situation? If you're looking for a continuous display of color from late spring



Before planting, assess how much light the plants will receive.



till frost, annuals will work well except in dense shade. Flowering annuals do not bloom well in heavy shade; they all blossom more profusely as light is increased. Some annuals, however, do better in light shade than in full sun, which may fade colors or cause wilting the moment there is any moisture stress.

Impatiens are becoming an increasingly popular annual since they are now available in a wide range of intense colors and heights. Browallias, coleus, wax begonias, dwarf salvias and other shade tolerant annuals will begin blooming soon after frost danger is past if you start with robust young bedding plants. It doesn't make sense to direct seed annuals for a shady garden in our climate. By the time they accumulate enough food reserves to bloom attractively, the growing season is almost over.

Bulbs

Spring flowering bulbs can be planted in deep shade provided you treat them as annuals, planting new bulbs each fall and then digging them up and discarding them once they've bloomed. The bulbs you buy already have miniature flowers inside. All that's needed is a cold winter in the ground for those flower buds to emerge in spring. In order to

repeat the performance the following year, though, the leaves must receive full sunlight for most of the day until they die back naturally. This builds up food reserves for the next blooming cycle. Without enough sunlight, you'll get leaves each year but no flowers.

Some spring bulbs such as crocus, scillas, snowdrops and species tulips bloom and produce leaves early enough, before the trees leaf out, so that they receive adequate amounts of sun to blossom annually in a lightly shaded area. Daffodils naturalize beautifully in an open wooded area.

Perennials

Many perennials bloom reliably in light shade, but some will blossom in fairly dense shade. Most of these are woodland plants that usually blossom very early in the season, though there are some exceptions. The fringed bleeding heart blooms all season, and black snakeroot blossoms mid to late-summer. Most woodland flowers are muted and delicate rather than bold and brightly colored.

Unlike the annuals, which tend to bloom throughout the

see *SHADE* on page 5



Perennials which do well in dense shade include: Japanese spurge, goutweed, spotted deadnettle and hosta.