

Judging Shade

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When selecting plants for a garden it is very important to understand the type of sunlight a particular garden site is receiving. Some plants will tolerate a wide range of light conditions, while others are more limited. Many plants will stay alive and grow in adverse conditions, but will never reach their potential. The trees and shrubs around the garden will grow turning a full sun area into semi or full shade. If the original plants are going to be kept in this area, a little thinning and pruning of the woody plants will allow more sunlight to reach the garden. If this still doesn't provide for enough sunlight the plants need to be moved into better conditions.

Sunny

- areas that receive at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight
- east or west side of a building
- there is a marked difference between east, cool morning light and hot afternoon, west light
- must use full sun plants

Light Shade

- this is the same as full sun light areas except there might be a small amount of intermittent shade.
- use full sun plants
- many full sun plants will grow better in this site than in full sun

Full shade

- no direct sunlight
- diffused indirect light
- enough light to support shade tolerant plants
- use shade tolerant plants and shade plants

Dense Shade

- no direct sunlight
- always in shade
- directly on the north side of a structure
- shade under trees which cast a deep shadow such as low branched maples or conifers (this is considered deep shade)
- in many cases it is better to use non living material like mulches in the very deep shaded conditions
- too many times we try to force plants to grow in these conditions
- the dry dense shade such as on the south side of a house with an overhang is almost impossible place to get plants to grow
- if you have walked through a conifer forest, it becomes evident that not much grows in these conditions

Spring sun - summer shade

- this is under a deciduous tree
- there are no leaves in the spring so it is full sun, but as the leaves fill out it produces different degrees of shade
- good place for woodland gardens and spring bulbs
- to broaden the plant pallet for wooded sites, walk through the area and mark out the pockets of light were plants that need more light may grow