



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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February 2003



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“Crossover” Plants

Dennis Strole, Johnson's Landscape Designer

In the process of determining the plants you want to incorporate into your home landscape, the two most important factors are the amount of sun they will receive and how wet or dry the soil will be. The majority of plants perform best in sunny or shady exposures and in wet or dry soil conditions, not both. If you have tried to use one of your favorite plants in the wrong spot and it performed poorly or died, you understand the significance of placement.

There are a few plants though, that have more versatility than most and will tolerate completely different situations. I like to refer to these as “crossover” plants. The lists below include different varieties of shrubs that handle shade as well as full sun; and shrubs that tough out dry spots without drowning in wet areas. Keep in mind that “wet” doesn't mean sitting in water all day; “dry” doesn't mean never receiving any water; and “shade” doesn't always mean growing in total shade. When newly planted, these shrubs will require a season or two to acclimate to the soil conditions and generate a healthy root system, but once established can be used successfully in different exposures within the landscape. These plants will take on varied looks when used in opposite (wet/dry, sun/shade) settings. For example, plants in the shade will grow slower and have fewer flowers than if they were planted in the sun, but that just adds to the interest!

Another thing to keep in mind is future growth of surrounding trees and shrubs. An area that is sunny now may be shady in a few years and plants that adapt will eliminate removing those looking poor and replacing them with new ones better suited to the different exposure.

In the back of our Plant Guide you'll find more lists of trees and shrubs that grow well in specific situations, but few plants like these that will “crossover.”

SUN or SHADE

Ornamental Shrubs

- 1) Boxwood
- 2) Euonymus
- 3) Inkberry Holly
- 4) Nandina
- 5) Pyracantha

Flowering Shrubs

- 1) Glossy Abelia
- 2) Red Twig Dogwood
- 3) Itea (Sweetspire)
- 4) Quince
- 5) Spirea
- 6) Burkwood Viburnum

Ground Covers/Vines

- 1) Boston Ivy
- 2) Purpleleaf Wintercreeper

Ground Covers/Vines cont'd

- 3) Honeysuckles
- 4) Houttuynia
- 5) Vinca Minor
- 6) Clematis
- 7) Virginia Creeper
- 8) Ajuga

MOIST or DRY

Ornamental Shrubs

- 1) Boxwood
- 2) 'Jacqueline Hillier' Dwarf Elm
- 3) Euonymus
- 4) Inkberry Holly

Flowering Shrubs

- 1) Glossy Abelia
- 2) Chokeberry
- 3) Itea (Sweetspire)
- 4) Spirea

Ground Covers/Vines

- 1) Purpleleaf Wintercreeper
- 2) Honeysuckles
- 3) Houttuynia
- 4) Liriope