



Top Perennials for Shade

This is a list of some of the best perennials that will accept varying degrees of shade for East Texas. A perennial plant is a type of plant that lives for more than two years, regrowing and blooming each season after going dormant during the colder months. Unlike annuals, which complete their life cycle in one growing season, perennials can survive through various seasons, producing new growth from the same roots each year. They often require less replanting and maintenance, making them a popular choice for gardeners who want long-lasting greenery and flowers. See a Plants of Texas Garden Associate for help in determining the best plants for your landscape needs.

- ***Ajuga (Ajuga reptans)*** – Ground cover with glossy foliage ranging in colors from green to burgundy to bronze. This plant blooms violet-blue flowers in late spring. There are many varieties of *Ajuga* with different sizes and leaf shapes. *Ajuga* performs best in morning sun and afternoon shade and loves moisture.
- ***Autumn Fern (Dryopteris erythrosora)*** – This is a colorful fern with reddish-colored fronds as a young plant. As it matures, it turns deep green. Autumn ferns grow 2 feet tall and wide. This shade lover needs constantly moist soil, making it a perfect option for mixed borders. Deer tolerant.
- ***Cast Iron (Aspidistra elatior)*** – This is a deciduous plant that dies down to the ground during winter, but pops back up in spring. It prefers full shade and grows about 1-3 feet tall and wide.
- ***Columbine (Aquilegia spp.)*** – This plant comes in multiple colors and only needs about 6 hours of sunlight a day, requiring a bit more than others. It grows about 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide.
- ***Coral Bells (Heuchera sanguinea)*** – A deciduous plant with mound-like characteristics. Many varieties exist, typically growing 8 to 24 inches tall and wide, depending on the variety. Leaf colors range from black, deep cherry red, caramel, lime green, to various variegated combinations, even silver and purple. They

bloom flower spikes and are perfect for mixed borders, rock gardens, and beds. Deer tolerant.

- **Flax Lily (*Dianella tasmanica*)** – A variegated perennial resembling iris leaves, producing white blooms. It grows 1-2 feet tall and 1-3 feet wide, usually dying back to the ground in winter and re-emerging in spring.
- **Giant Corkscrew Juncus (*Juncus effusus* ‘Big Twister’)** – This tall, upright curly *Juncus* reaches 1 to 2 feet tall and wide. The foliage resembles large, spiraling corkscrews. It prefers wet or moist soil and can even be submerged in water.
- **Hellebore (*Helleborus orientalis*)** – This plant blooms from winter to spring. It is a deciduous plant that grows 12-18 inches tall and wide.
- **Holly Fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum* ‘Rochfordianum’)** – This fern has stiff, dark green fronds with coarsely fringed margins. It has a spreading growth habit and reaches 2 to 3 feet tall and wide, making it a great option for containers, borders, or as a groundcover. Deer tolerant and evergreen.
- **Hosta (*Hosta* spp.)** – There are many varieties of *Hostas*, ranging in leaf color and height. This perennial has a large clumping form, and many produce fragrant, tubular spikes of flowers in mid-summer, ranging from white to blue to lavender. *Hostas* prefer moist soil and full to partial shade, making them beautiful for shady borders or in containers.
- **Iris (*Iris* spp.)** – *Iris* is low maintenance and great for mixing with other plants or as a tall ground cover. Most varieties grow 2 feet tall and wide and bloom in spring.
- **Lily of the Nile (*Agapanthus africanus*)** – This evergreen plant forms a clump of strap-like leaves that grow to be 1.5 to 2 feet tall and wide. The bloom color is ocean blue and white, with flower clusters rising 2 feet above the foliage during summer. This perennial is excellent in containers and as an accent plant.
- **Leopard Plant (*Ligularia* spp.)** – This plant thrives in full shade. It is an herbaceous perennial that dies back around 20 degrees Fahrenheit. It prefers soil high in organic matter and grows about 2-3 feet tall and wide.
- **Liriope (*Liriope muscari*)** – This plant usually grows 12-18 inches in height and width. It is evergreen and produces blue-to-purple blooms from summer to fall.
- **Texas Gold Columbine (*Aquilegia hinckleyana*)** – This plant features fern-like leaves with gold-yellow flowers that bloom in early summer. It grows to 2 feet tall and wide and needs moist, well-drained soil.

- ***Turks Cap (Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii)*** – This native deciduous plant grows about 2-5 feet tall and wide. It can tolerate full sun but prefers shade. It produces bright red, cup-shaped flowers that bloom from summer to fall.