



Top Shrubs for Shade

This is a list of some of the best shrubs that will accept varying degrees of shade for East Texas. (*The * indicates some varieties of each shrub listed that may be able to tolerate more sun than others. Technically, some varieties of these shrubs could fit on both the sun and shade shrub list for East Texas pending the variety but is on the shade list because the majority of the species needs shade to partial sun*). A shrub is a type of woody plant characterized by its multiple stems and shorter height compared to trees. Typically, shrubs grow to a height of 3 to 15 feet and have a dense, bushy structure. Unlike trees, which usually have a single trunk, shrubs have several branches that grow near the ground. They can be evergreen, retaining their leaves year-round, or deciduous, shedding leaves in the colder months. Shrubs are often used in landscaping for hedges, borders, or decorative accents due to their variety in size, shape, and color. See a Plants of Texas Garden Associate for help in determining the best plants for your landscape needs.

1. **Abelia** (*Abelia spp.*) – An evergreen shrub with oval-shaped leaves on arching branches. Foliage colors range from glossy green to yellow, with some varieties showcasing shades of burgundy, orange, pink, variegated, and bronze. This shrub blooms tubular, fragrant flowers usually in shades of pink, yellow, and white. Some varieties change foliage colors in different seasons. Growth habits vary by variety, but you can expect heights ranging from 2 to 10 feet and widths from 2 to 8 feet. Abelias are related to the honeysuckle family, making them a nonstop food source for pollinators. They need 4-6 hours of sunlight and can tolerate full sun to part shade.
2. **Acuba** (*Aucuba japonica 'Gold Dust'*) - Gold Dust is the most popular variety of this evergreen shrub. It is very tolerant of full shade and dry soils, making it a perfect option for dark corners where very little else seems to grow. Gold Dust has green leaves variegated with splashes of yellow. Female

plants will produce red berries. It grows 6 feet tall and 3-6 feet wide and is a slow grower that prefers well-drained soil.

3. **Aralia** (*Fatsia japonica*) - Evergreen shrub with large, tropical-looking, fan-shaped leaves. Mature plants bloom white flowers followed by black berries. It needs moist, very well-drained soil and protection during extreme cold weather. Grows 6 to 8 feet tall and 4 feet wide.
4. ***Azalea** (*Azalea spp.*) - There are many hybrids and varieties. Azaleas are evergreen, flowering shrubs perfect for hedges, borders, or mass plantings. They must have moist, well-drained acidic soil. Standard azaleas bloom once a year, while Encore® azalea varieties will bloom several times a year. Bloom colors and growth habits vary by variety, with Encore® azaleas tolerating more sun than standard azaleas, which prefer only morning sun or full shade. Standard azaleas can bloom with virtually no sun.
5. ***Boxwood** (*Buxus spp.*) - Boxwoods are evergreen shrubs with small, dark green, oval-shaped leaves. New growth is light green, but overall, boxwoods maintain their green color throughout all seasons. This shrub has dense foliage, making them easy to prune and shape. Growth habits vary among the many different varieties.
6. **Camellia** (*Camellia spp.*) - Broadleaf evergreen flowering shrub available in many varieties. Camellias should be grown in moist, acidic, loose, organically rich soils that are well-drained. Avoid wet soils and inconsistent watering. They are temperature-sensitive, but most varieties are safe in East Texas if temperatures don't drop below 10°F. Bloom colors and growth habits vary by variety. Japonica varieties prefer shade and bloom late January through March, while Sasanqua varieties prefer more sun and bloom mid to late October through December.
7. **Cleyera** (*Cleyera spp.*) - Evergreen upright shrub that is a slow grower. The foliage is dark and glossy, blooming white, fragrant flowers in the spring. In the fall and winter, the shrub produces berries that are a valuable food source for wildlife. Cleyera is great for informal hedges, landscapes, and borders, with growth habits varying by variety.
8. **Gardenia** (*Gardenia spp.*) - Gardenias are evergreen shrubs known for their beautiful foliage and showy, fragrant white flowers that bloom from

summer to fall. They need moist, well-drained acidic soil and will tolerate morning sun. Size, winter hardiness, and growth habits vary by variety.

9. ***Hydrangea** (*Hydrangea spp.*) - Deciduous flowering shrub with many varieties. Showy blooms typically start blooming in late spring and can last into autumn. Hydrangeas are soil pH-specific (pink in alkaline soil and blue in acidic soil) and prefer consistently moist, well-draining acidic soil. Height, width, and flower colors vary by variety. Oakleaf hydrangeas are native to Texas.
10. **Mahonia** (*Mahonia spp.*) - This is an evergreen shrub that prefers partial shade and is cold-hardy for our zone. It is also deer-resistant. Depending on the variety, it can range from 1.5-10 feet tall and 3-8 feet wide.
11. **Nandina** (*Nandina spp.*) - Evergreen shrub known for its ever-changing leaves and mostly dwarf growing habit. There are many cultivars of Nandina. Foliage is glossy and ranges in color based on variety and season, including lime green, yellow-green, burgundy, blush, orange, and deep red. Nandina shrubs are mostly non-flowering. They love water, and most varieties grow 2-3 feet tall and wide.
12. **Osmanthus** (*Osmanthus spp.*) - Evergreen flowering shrub to tree form. There are many cultivars and species of Osmanthus, with the most popular in East Texas being 'Sweet Olive.' The leaves have serrated margins, and the blooms are small, clustered, and very fragrant, with an apricot scent. This shrub blooms in the spring, and most species produce bluish-black fruit after the bloom cycle. Osmanthus shrubs produce more flowers on unpruned plants, with growth habits reaching 10 feet tall by 6-8 feet wide, depending on the variety.
13. ***Pittosporum** (*Pittosporum spp.*) - Evergreen flowering shrub that comes in several different varieties. The leaves are mostly glossy and can range from dark green to green and white variegated, depending on the variety. Pittosporum blooms very fragrant flowers in the spring that have a citrus scent. It can tolerate sandy soil and is heat-tolerant, as well as tolerant of salt spray. Growing habits vary by species; dwarf varieties average about 3 feet tall and wide, while non-dwarf varieties can reach upwards of 10 feet tall and wide.

14. ***Skywalker Boxwood** (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Skywalker') - This is a good accent plant that provides height and evergreen leaves. It prefers full sun to partial shade but does better with more shade. It grows 8-15 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. It is one of the fastest-growing boxwoods and has great disease resistance, making it a better alternative to the sky pencil holly.
15. ***Viburnum** (*Viburnum spp.*) - Evergreen and deciduous blooming shrub with many species. Growth habits vary depending on the variety, with some foliage being waxy and others glossy. Typically, it blooms either white or pink-red fragrant flowers that attract pollinators and have a sweet floral scent. After the bloom cycle, it produces berries that range in color from pink to red and blue to black. It is an excellent shrub for mass plantings, landscapes, or hedges.
16. **Yew** (*Yew spp.*) - Yews come in different varieties that range from upright forms to low-growing forms, almost like ground cover. They are evergreen with dark green, needle-like foliage. They are deer-resistant and drought- and heat-tolerant once established, but they still need partial sun to shade to thrive. Growth habits depend on the variety.