

# Top Annual Plants for Shady Areas

By **BH&G Garden Editors** | Updated June 09, 2015

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Transform garden shade spots in your backyard into a spring-to-fall shade-flowers show. Start with one or more of these easy, colorful shade plants.

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# Everything In This Slideshow



## Fuchsia

Bring elegance to your garden with fuchsias. These shade flowers bear gorgeous pendulous flowers, making them ideal for hanging baskets. The petal-filled blooms appear in a number of shades of red, pink, and purple, and some selections offer variegated foliage. So enjoy these beautiful shade flowers—and the hummingbirds they invariably attract.



## Balsam

Balsam is an old-fashioned plant closely related to impatiens. Like its cousin, it blooms in a wide range of shades, though balsam shade flowers tend to be taller and the flowers much more intricate than impatiens. It also self-seeds, so plant it once and you're likely to enjoy the beautiful blooms for years in the garden shade.



## Lobelia

Add lobelias to shade gardens to bring rich, true blues in the garden. These trailing, colorful shade annuals bloom prolifically in spring and fall, almost covering themselves in flowers. Annual lobelia is a cool-season plant that does best in shade in the South, though it loves partial shade in the North.



## Torenia

Sometimes called wishbone flower, torenia is a charming garden shade plant with beautiful trumpet-shaped blooms in a range of shades from blues and purples to pinks and yellows. Versatile torenia is also available in both upright and trailing varieties, making it perfect for beds and borders as well as containers.

**Test Garden Tip:** Torenia shade flowers are good for attracting hummingbirds.

Try 20 more suggestions for underused annuals.



## Oxalis

Golden-leaf selections of oxalis are the perfect complement to browallia; blue and gold always look good together. Oxalis varieties may offer attractive green or purple foliage as well and are sometimes called shamrocks because of their leaf shape. They also produce pretty pink, white, or yellow flowers. Some varieties of these colorful shade annuals are happy in sun or shade; others need protection from the sun during the hottest part of the day.



## Impatiens

Impatiens is one of the most popular plants for shady areas—and it's easy to see why. They bloom constantly from spring to fall, offer flowers in just about every color, and couldn't be easier to grow. Look for New Guinea impatiens, which bear larger blossoms and stockier stems; double impatiens, which feature petal-filled, roselike shade flowers; or mini impatiens, which cover themselves in small blooms.

Find other annuals for shade in [Plant Encyclopedia](#).



## Coleus

Grow shade annuals like coleus for its fantastic foliage—there are hundreds of varieties, and they feature leaves splashed, spotted, streaked, and otherwise colored with shades of chartreuse, purple, pink, red, black, and green. Make eye-catching combinations by growing a few varieties of coleus together—or complement your favorite flowers with coleuses that have similar leaf colors.



## Perilla

Like coleus, perilla features fabulous foliage, though in a more limited range of colors. Varieties such as 'Magilla' (shown here) offer variegated leaves. Older selections of these shade flowers have pure purple foliage, tend to self-seed freely in the garden, and are sometimes used in Asian cooking.



## Browallia

Browallia is a surefire pick for adding rich color to shade gardens. This delightful annual bears star-shaped flowers in blue, lavender, and white over emerald-green foliage. It's a fast grower that does well in shade or sun. In warm-climate areas it may self-seed, but not to the point of being considered a pest.



## Polka-Dot Plant

Add a dose of whimsy to your shade garden with a polka-dot plant. These annuals bear pretty, purple-green leaves that, as the name suggests, are decoratively speckled in shades of pink and white. Native to Madagascar, these tropical, colorful shade plants thrive in hot and humid conditions. Adaptable polka-dot plant is also relatively drought-tolerant.



## Sweet Potato Vine

You can't beat these fast-growing shade plants for bold summer color. Sweet potato vine produces bronze, purple, or chartreuse foliage, depending on the variety, and grows quickly once temperatures heat up. Use it in containers or as a dramatic groundcover.



## Viola

Like lobelia, violas are cool-season annuals that can take full sun in early spring and fall, but they'll bloom a bit later into the summer if you grow them in the shade, especially in the South. Violas bear flowers in a dizzying range of shades including many wonderful bicolors such as the 'Sorbet Coconut Swirl' shown here.

**Note:** Violas may be short-lived perennials in some areas, though they're often grown as annuals.



## Beefsteak Plant

Pack a lot of plants in a small area with beefsteak plant's bold foliage. Available in shades of purple, pink, lime, and cream, the leaves look as great as coleus. It's easy to grow—in fact, you can even bring containers of beefsteak plant indoors as a houseplant for a bold shot of winter color.



## Top Shade Garden Plants

Don't let the shady spot in your garden take the backseat. See our favorite plants to fill your shade garden.

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