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Shade Loving Annuals *by Craig Mauney, Horticulture Agent*

Many times in the home landscape buildings, fences, or trees can shade your landscape areas but you can still have some flowers in those areas. Your selection is limited but the selections available are expanding every year. Most annuals are bred to bloom and can transform a corner in the garden to a colorful spot with the right selection. Shade loving annuals can perk up your yard but you need to pick the right plant for the right place. Shade annuals do mix well with shade perennials to add color. We often add colorful annuals that have bright foliage for when there is not a lot of bloom on the perennials. The most common flowering annuals for shade we see on the market are impatiens and begonias. These favorites do well to complement shade perennials such as Hosta and Astilbe. They also do well in containers we can add to a shady spot. Some of the varieties have colorful foliage as well as bloom. Most varieties perform well in areas that have less than 6 hours of sun each day. In deep shade, they will not perform at their peak of bloom.

Impatiens



Impatiens - I. walleriana

There are impatiens available for most situations. There are mounding varieties that work well for small flowerbeds, borders, and containers. Trailing varieties will cascade in containers and window boxes. New Guinea impatiens are tall and can tolerate more sun but also have colorful leaves. In the past few years there has been an increase in the number of impatiens varieties and colors. It is presently the top shade bedding plant in North Carolina. The most popular type of impatiens is *I. walleriana*. They grow in mounds from about 6-24 inches in height. Some varieties have 1-2 inch flowers. There are some wonderful double blooming varieties. The trailing impatiens will spread over the bed up to 20 inches. Most impatiens will bloom with only a few hours of morning sun. The New Guinea impatiens have unique features, such as growing up to 2 feet tall, having larger flowers and variegated leaves. The New Guinea types need more sun to have heavy bloom in the garden. Both types of impatiens do like cool temperatures around 60-70 degrees F. and plenty of soil moisture. Impatiens do not like a hot sunny location. Of course the New Guinea type will tolerate more sun as long as they are kept moist. Make sure you wait till after danger of frost to plant, since all impatiens are frost-sensitive.

Begonias

If you are looking for an easy care shade lover, the begonia is a good choice. They look great in window boxes, containers, as well as the flower bed. They have brightly colored leaves that

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Wax Begonia *Begonia semperflorens*
Variety - "Prelude White"

contrast with bright flowers. They will also tolerate full sun in some microclimates or cool summer areas. Begonias come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. The wax begonia is the most common bedding type and they look their best when grouped together in beds or containers. The leaves can be bronze or green which gives us a nice focal area. Flower colors include white, pink, and red. Other types of begonias include angel wing begonias with broad foliage and tuberous begonias with their camellia looking flowers. Plant your begonias when the danger of frost has past. Most do best if the area for planting is amended with compost.

Carolina Allspice by Derek Morris, Horticulture Technician

Carolina allspice, commonly known to many local people as bubbly or sweet bubbly, is a fantastic old fashioned shrub for modern day landscapes. This shrub, which is native to wooded areas from Virginia into Florida, is botanically known as *Calycanthus floridus* and was commonly planted by the early settlers in Williamsburg, Old Salem and beyond. These shrubs are still commonly found growing around old abandoned home sites throughout the south. Its claim to fame is the apple/strawberry like fragrance of its blooms in spring, which on a good variety, can easily permeate an entire yard. This is reason enough to grow it in the landscape but it has other attributes that make it a good addition to the landscape. It sports large dark green leaves throughout the summer that turn a nice buttery yellow in the fall before dropping. The fragrant blooms, which are a dark lurid red, are quite pretty on close inspection with threadlike petals. The seedpods, which form later in the summer, are also quite interesting.

If the twigs or branches are broken they exude a spicy sweet fragrance and early colonists sometimes used the outer bark as a substitute for cinnamon which was hard to obtain and quite expensive. And thus the common name Carolina allspice. Ladies commonly carried around the blossoms since they were so perfumed.

Although Carolina allspice is almost always found in shaded areas in nature it adapts very well to full sun and

of course does quite well in mostly shaded areas. While most will sport fragrant blooms, occasionally

one can be found that does not. For this reason it is best to purchase a named variety or at least one that you know is fragrant. Carolina allspice is usually started from cuttings or offshoots. The shrub will grow from 5 to 9 foot tall and can have a spread between 6 and 10 foot but it can easily be maintained by pruning if it gets larger than you like. The best time to prune is when the plant is dormant.

This is a very tough shrub that is not fussy about soil conditions and while it likes moisture



Variety - "Athens"



Variety - "Michael Lindsey"

retentive soil, it is quite drought tolerant once

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established. Of course keeping the ground mulched heavily around your shrub will keep down weeds and will help hold moisture in the soil. Keeping a newly planted specimen watered during its first summer is always a good idea. A good rule of thumb for most plants is to provide at least one inch of water per week.

Over the years there have been a number of selected varieties discovered on someone's property or in the wild and propagated. A few really great ones are

'Michael Lindsey' which has very fragrant blooms and particularly lustrous foliage. This one was selected in NC. The variety 'athens' selected in GA is quite unusual for having yellow/green flowers which are also very fragrant. 'Purpureus' is a selection with purplish new growth that fades to green during summer.

Adding one or two of these native shrubs to your landscape is a great idea and especially placed near a patio or near a window that might be opened in the spring. The fragrance is out of this world!

From the Master Gardener Hotline - Fertilizer *by Bert Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer*

We had a call last year from a man wanting to know what brand of fertilizer was recommended by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Some questions are difficult to answer, but this was an easy one. The NC Extension does not recommend any specific brand of fertilizer. As a starting point, it is best to get a soil test. A soil test report may recommend a general type of fertilizer such as 5-10-5 fertilizer or an equivalent, but will not call for a special brand. It may also recommend the application of nitrogen expressed as pounds per 1,000 Sq Ft. This all gets confusing when you go to your garden center and there are a variety of fertilizers with different amounts of N-P-K (Nitrogen -1st number, Phosphorous- 2nd number and Potassium -3rd number).

The numbers on the fertilizer package are the percentage of N-P-K that will treat 1,000 Sq Ft. For a 40 pound bag of fertilizer marked 16-4-8, the amount of nitrogen that will be applied to 1,000 Sq Ft is $40 \times 16\% (.16) = 8$ pounds. To calculate the amount of product needed to apply 1 pound of Nitrogen per 1,000 SQ FT use the calculation of 1 divided by .16 = 6.25 Pounds. While using the recommended application rate on the bag of 16-4-8, results in slightly more than 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 Sq Ft it is not excessive. When looking at the nitrogen recommendation in a soil test report, remember that it is only a guide. It is just not possible from a soil test to accurately determine the actual amount of nitrogen required.

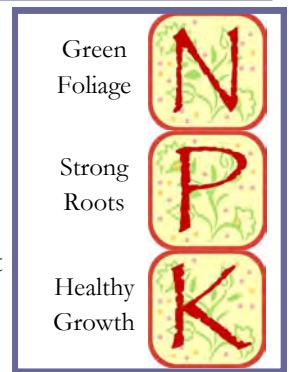
Nitrogen is a very important nutrient and aids in plant health and development. It promotes rapid growth, chlorophyll formation and protein synthesis. However, when it is leached into our water system, it can become an environmental problem. Nitrogen supports the growth of algae and when these organisms die, they decompose and reduce the oxygen level in water.

Excessive amounts of nitrogen can create "dead zones" of low or no oxygen and can kill or weaken fish or shell fish. As a general rule, it's a good policy to keep application rates of nitrogen on the low side.

Phosphorous is also an important nutrient and stimulates early root growth, hastens plant maturity and increases disease resistance.

Excessive amounts of phosphorous can also be an environmental problem with water, similar to nitrogen. Fortunately, Carolina soils are generally low in phosphorous, but care should still be taken not to use an overabundance of Phosphorous.

It is important to be careful when applying any chemical to your lawn or garden. Keep in mind that runoff water from lawns and gardens ends up in one of our river basins. While plants need Nitrogen and Phosphorous, over fertilizing can cause problems. As mentioned in previous articles, the best way to improve soil structure is to add organic matter. Organic soil holds nutrients and makes them more available to plants as microbial organisms break down. Grass clippings add nitrogen to your soil, so when you mow your yard leave the clippings lay. If you use synthetic fertilizers, select high water insoluble types that last for longer periods of time and ultimately reduce the amount of fertilizer that is required. Most fertilizer companies such as Scotts, Vigoro, Blue Chip, Turf Trust and others carry such products. You might also experiment with fertilizers that have low nitrogen and phosphorous content and actually add organic matter to your soil. There are products out there, but you have to do a little research and be sure to read the labels.





Crocosmia x 'Lucifer' gets its name from the color red's association with the devil. It has bright red blooms on the end of spiky stems. To me they look like little pitchforks

on the end that just keep on blooming. I first became familiar with this plant while visiting an Extension Master Gardener's landscape. I became intrigued with the plant and of course had to research it in more detail. I think this plant adds a nice deep red color to the perennial garden.

Plant type: perennial (bulb)

Features: funnel-shaped flowers, sword like foliage

Colors: bright orange, red, or yellow

Height: foliage to 3 feet, flower sprays to 4 feet

Light: full sun

Soil: well-drained, organic additions best

Water: medium (not a drought-tolerant plant)

Problems: none I could find, will multiply

Native: England

Range: Zones 5 to 9

Remarks: attracts hummingbirds

In the Landscape – This summer blooming bulb is a member of the iris family, with foliage like gladioli. It appears in catalogs sometimes under the name of montbretia. Crocosmia has an arching form making it great for the back of the flower border. Its bold orange to red tubular flowers mix well with other flowers such as purple coneflower. The flowers appear in our area around June or July.

Planting and Care – For best growth, this perennial needs rich, well drained soil and plenty of sun. Adding a good 3-inch layer of compost when making the perennial bed in our area is a must for this plant to do well. To keep them from getting overcrowded they need to be divided about every two or three years depending on the growth in your garden. This plant is said to make a nice container plant, although I haven't seen one in a container. In the container, one will have to fertilize every other week with water-soluble fertilizer until flowering. There are lots of other named selections bred in England. I found several listed in different places but am not familiar with them – 'Emberglow', 'Spitfire', and 'Bressingham Blaze'.

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