

Planting in the Shade: Oklahoma's Best Shade-Loving Plants

Gardening in Oklahoma can present unique challenges due to the state's diverse climate and soil conditions. However, for those with shady areas in their gardens, there



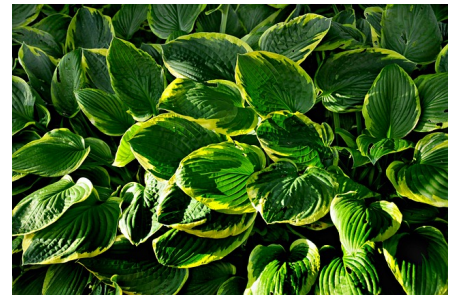
are plenty of plants that thrive in lower light conditions, and even some that prefer a break from the harsh Oklahoma sun. Utilizing resources from the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Extension office, this article profiles five popular shade-loving garden plants, including an annual, a perennial, a shrub, an ornamental grass, and a tree.

1. Annual: Impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*)

Impatiens are a staple for shady gardens due to their vibrant colors and ability to flourish in low-light conditions. These annuals are beloved for their wide range of colors, including red, pink, white, and purple. Impatiens thrive in rich, well-drained soil and benefit from regular watering to keep the soil consistently moist. They are perfect for adding splashes of color to garden beds, borders, and containers in shaded areas.

2. Perennial: Hosta (also Plantain Lily (*Hosta spp.*))

Hostas are a favorite perennial for shaded gardens, known for their lush, decorative foliage. These plants come in various sizes, shapes, and shades of green, often with striking variegation. Hostas prefer well-drained, fertile soil and benefit from mulching to retain moisture and regulate soil temperature. While hostas are primarily grown for their foliage, they also produce delicate lavender or white flowers on tall stalks in the summer, adding an extra layer of beauty to the garden.



3. Shrub: Azalea (*Rhododendron spp.*)

Azaleas are stunning shrubs that thrive in the dappled sunlight of wooded areas. These plants are cherished for their spectacular spring blooms, which come in a variety of colors, including pink, red, white, and purple. Azaleas prefer acidic, well-drained soil and benefit from mulching to conserve moisture and protect their shallow roots. Regular watering during dry spells and light pruning after flowering are recommended to maintain their shape and encourage vigorous growth.

4. Ornamental Grass: Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Chasmanthium latifolium, commonly known as Northern Sea Oats, is a versatile perennial grass known for its distinctive, flat, drooping seed heads that resemble oats. This ornamental grass thrives in partial shade to full sun and tolerates a variety of soil types, including clay. Reaching heights of 2 to 5 feet, Northern Sea Oats provide excellent texture and movement in the landscape. They are particularly valued for their ability to stabilize soil and prevent erosion. Additionally, the seed heads persist through winter, adding visual interest to the garden year-round.



5. Tree: Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

The Eastern Redbud is a small, deciduous tree that performs well in partial shade, making it a popular choice for Oklahoma landscapes. This native tree is known for its striking display of pink to purple flowers that bloom on bare branches in early spring, before the leaves emerge. The heart-shaped leaves turn yellow in the fall, adding seasonal interest. The Eastern Redbud's adaptability to various soil types (although it prefers moist, well-drained soil) helps it to serve as a beautiful understory tree in wooded gardens or as an ornamental focal point in the landscape.

Creating a thriving garden in the shaded areas of an Oklahoma landscape is entirely possible with the right plant selections. Utilizing recommendations from the Oklahoma State University Extension office, gardeners can choose from a variety of shade-loving plants such as colorful impatiens, decorative hostas, striking azaleas, distinctive Northern Sea Oats, and our notable state tree, the Eastern Redbud. Each of these plants offers unique qualities and benefits that contribute to a lush and vibrant garden, even in the shade. By understanding the specific needs of these plants, gardeners can cultivate beautiful and sustainable shaded gardens in Oklahoma.

Resources:

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6425: Annual Flowers for Specific Uses in Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6444: Drought-Tolerant Plant Selections for Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6410: Perennial Flowers for Specific Uses in Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6439: Selecting Shrubs for the Landscape](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6456: Selecting Deciduous Trees For Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Plant Profile: Eastern Redbud](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6470: Ornamental Grasses and Grass-Like Plants for Oklahoma](#)