

DRY SHADE PLANTS	
Common (Botanical) Name	Comments
Rue Anemone ( <i>Thalictrum thalictroides</i> )	deep shade
False Rue Anemone ( <i>Enemion biternatum</i> )	deep shade
Trillium, various ( <i>Trillium Species</i> )	easy in rich soil, some showy
Obedient plant ( <i>Physostegia virginiana</i> )	showy flowers
Wild Ginger ( <i>Asarum canadense</i> )	dependable once established
Tall Bellflower ( <i>Campanulastrum americanum</i> )	dappled light
Greek Valerian ( <i>Polemonium reptans</i> )	showy flowers
Virginia Waterleaf ( <i>Hydrophyllum virginianum</i> )	showy flowers
Mayapple ( <i>Podophyllum peltatum</i> )	fruit poisonous
Blue Cohosh ( <i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i> )	
Bishop's Cap ( <i>Mitella diphylla</i> )	deep shade
Wild Geranium ( <i>Geranium maculatum</i> )	dappled light, showy flowers
Solomon's Seal ( <i>Polygonatum species</i> )	
Spring Beauty ( <i>Claytonia virginica</i> )	forms thick mats of spring flowers
Boneset ( <i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i> )	showy flowers
Squirrel's Corn ( <i>Dicentra canadensis</i> )	showy spring flowers deep shade
Dutchman's Britches ( <i>Dicentra cucullaria</i> )	showy spring flowers, deep shade
Virgin's Bower ( <i>Clematis virginiana</i> )	vine, showy flowers
Smooth Hedge Nettle ( <i>Stachys tenuifolia</i> )	deep shade
Great Lobelia ( <i>Lobelia siphilitica</i> )	
Hepatica ( <i>Hepatica nobilis</i> )	showy spring flowers
Virginia Bluebells ( <i>Mertensia virginica</i> )	showy spring flowers
Twinleaf ( <i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i> )	showy spring flowers
Bloodroot ( <i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i> )	showy spring flowers, easy
False Solomon's Seal ( <i>Maianthemum species</i> )	showy flowers

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Columbine ( <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> )	showy flowers, spreads well from seeds
Wild Stonewort ( <i>Sedum ternatum</i> )	
Virginia Creeper ( <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> )	vine, food for birds
American Germander ( <i>Teucrium canadense</i> )	dappled light
Foxglove Beardstongue ( <i>Penstemon digitalis</i> )	showy flowers
Green Dragon ( <i>Arisaema dracontium</i> )	
Woodland Phlox ( <i>Phlox divaricata</i> )	showy flowers
Dutchman's Pipe ( <i>Aristoluchia tomentosa</i> )	showy vine
Eastern Chokecherry ( <i>Prunus virginiana</i> )	shrub, fruit for birds, thicket-forming
Red-osier Dogwood ( <i>Cornus stolonifera</i> )	shrub, thicket-forming
Spicebush ( <i>Lindera benzoin</i> )	host for Spicebush Swallowtail
Celadine Poppy ( <i>Stylophorum diphyllum</i> )	showy flowers, very tolerant
American Elderberry ( <i>Sambucus canadensis</i> )	Shrub, showy flowers, food for birds
Shrubby St. John'swort ( <i>Hypericum prolificum</i> )	dappled light, showy flowers
Nannyberry ( <i>Viburnum lentago</i> )	shrub, dappled light, fruit for birds
Winterberry ( <i>Ilex verticellata</i> )	shrub, dappled light, fruit for birds
Serviceberry ( <i>Amelanchier canadensis</i> )	Shrub, fruit for birds, many species
Woodland Sedges ( <i>Carex laxiflora, C. radiata</i> )	
Rush ( <i>Caryx laxiflora C. scoparia</i> )	
Bottle-brush Grass ( <i>Hystrix patula</i> )	
Wood Rush ( <i>Luzula multiflora</i> )	
Wood Reed ( <i>Cinna arundinacea</i> )	
Brome Grass ( <i>Bromus ciliates</i> )	showy fall flowers
Path Rush ( <i>Juncus tenuis</i> )	adapts to compacted, hard soils
Ladyslippers ( <i>Cypripedium species</i> )	showy flower
Various ferns	



The Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) Backyard Conservation Committee has created this series of fact sheets on "Backyard Conservation—Native Habitats" to fill a void in information about several diverse habitat types that can be created in backyards and neighborhoods in Central Indiana. By encouraging landowners to create a variety of unique habitat types, we are helping create a healthy, sustainable ecosystem for humans and wildlife alike. Developing shady planting beds into native gardens takes some time, but is well worth the effort since natives take little care once established, add variety to your yard, and support native wildlife. The following information, plant lists, and product sources are intended to get you started and should not be viewed as all-inclusive. Gardeners know that flower beds are rarely ever finished. There are a number of "easy" shade loving plants listed that will thrive under less than ideal conditions to help you get started. As your soil becomes healthier or trees and shrubs mature, your planting options change. The knowledge you gain from your own successes and further study increases your ability to create native gardens in other areas of your yard. Learning about plants native to Central Indiana and what is available at your favorite plant supplier will encourage you to create new shady spaces filled with native plants.

### Planting and Cultivation

When planting native shade loving plants, basic techniques are the same as for any non-woody (or herbaceous) plant. It is important that you locate utilities and septic systems before planning beds and disturbing the soil. Dig a hole that is roughly 1 ½ times the size of the root mass you are planting. You will need to cover firmly with appropriate soil to the same soil line found on your plants, and you will need to water well as they grow. Native plants need little care, such as applications of fertilizer or winter protection, but watering as they become established must be done. Your native beds will look better and be more successful if you plant in clusters just as wild plants grow—stay away from even rows and wide empty spaces between plants. Keep the mature size of the plants in mind when planting. Allow enough space for them to grow into healthy, well-formed plants. Native species evolved in our area and our soils and weather, yet there are unique conditions found in your yard that would not be found naturally. So, before you start planting, you need to evaluate your site conditions.



Larry King, Univ. of Illinois, Urban Forestry-Urban Trees and Landscape

### Moisture and Soils

Shade can be quite bare and dry. If the site has been unplanted for more than a few months, these bare spots have limited organic matter to support plants or help hold moisture. The invertebrates and microbes necessary for healthy soil are present in limited quantities. Soil in dry conditions may appear light and powdery at the surface or very hard and compacted. Your bed will benefit greatly from compost to improve available nutrients. After planting, a layer of mulch will help hold moisture and improve soil quality. Both compost and mulch can be purchased—your native plants won't mind—or you can create your own. Just be certain to use materials that will enhance the native look of your planting areas. If the shade was created by mature trees, adding native shrubs can connect tall trees to the herbaceous planting. Shrubs grow deep roots that further improve the soil. They also provide wildlife food and cover. Dig a hole about twice the size of your shrub's root mass, cover to the soil line on your shrub, and mulch and water well.



This is one of three fact sheets on Backyard Conservation-Native Habitats. Access the other fact sheets at [www.hhrccd.org](http://www.hhrccd.org) or by calling (317) 290-3250.



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**Moisture and Soils (cont.)**

When shade is in a low spot or near a water source, you may find very different conditions—lots of organic matter, loose and soft soil, and plenty of worms and other invertebrates. This duplicates the conditions commonly found in woodlands where our native shade-lovers developed and you'll find it easier to establish a flourishing garden. But don't despair about that dry area—with careful plant selection, you will grow healthy plants that in turn will begin to improve the soil's ability to retain moisture and nutrients. More native plants bring more native microbes to break plant matter into available nutrients. Before too long you will have rich, moist soils that support many types of natives and you won't be able to tell the perfect beds from the ones you helped re-create.



Photo: Gallery/Create Your Garden

**Micro-climates**



**Dry Shade Plant: Purple Milkwort (*Polygala polygama*)**

The built environment around your yard changes the natural conditions and climate. Very often, and especially in newer building sites, your soil has become less acid by the leaching of materials from mortar, concrete, and limestone or brick. Some nutrients are not absorbed well in very acid or alkaline soils. If your shade garden is along a new structure, you may want to take a few soils tests. Compost and mulch might improve soil conditions and raise the acid levels. Check with a nursery or your local Soil and Water Conservation office for further help.

These same sites often have increased soil temperature when sun heats stones or reflects off surfaces and windows. These sites dry out more quickly than the rest of your yard and will need consistent mulching and watering until established or during unusually dry times. Since the sun's path changes, different times of the year will bring different amounts of this light and heat, so take that into consideration as you locate your beds.

The deep shade of a building is very different from the dappled shade in a woodland edge. You may find only a limited number of species will thrive in these sites. Moving plants away from structures by growing shrubs as a foundation planting and then developing the non-woody planting areas in this dappled light can reduce the impact of these deeply shaded areas.

Concrete additions like patios and sidewalks reduce the areas where water can filter into the ground. A roof eave or downspout can add large amounts of water that may pool in heavier soils after a rain, yet be dry during other times. Soil will be compacted near play areas and places with foot traffic. Again, observations made at different times of the year will help you understand your yard's micro-climate so you can better prepare for your plantings.

**Plant Selection**

Plants are listed under their most common name and scientific genus species. Some list the genus name only—these have species that are interchangeable in the garden. They are arranged by soil moisture and have info on ease of cultivation, light needs, and any special notes of interest. Some are listed as spreading quickly—these plants may crowd out other plants, so place accordingly and be prepared to share with your neighbors! Those shaded in green are easy plants for beginners and in new or less than ideal beds.



**Wet Shade Plant: Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium species*)**

It is very important that you obtain plants from dealers who sustainably harvest these natives. One of the reasons for planting natives is to help re-build our natural environment—they should not be removed from where they have created a thriving habitat. Likewise, taking plants from the wild on your own is not a good idea since a slight disturbance of a planting may ruin the site for further sustainability. Nurserymen provide dependable stock and are a great resource for specific cultivation needs for each plant. One last caution—pay close attention to genus species information in order to be certain you are planting species that are right for Central Indiana. For example, Whorled Loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*) is great for wet shade areas, but Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an invasive plant that can destroy wetland habitats. Many invasives are illegal to sell, yet you may find them at any number of retail outlets.

Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. 1995. *Northeast wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species.* Northeast National Technical Center, Chester.



**Moist Shade Plant: Canadian wildginger (*Asarum canadense* L.)**

Photo by Jennifer Anderson, US, IL, Rock Island Co., Rock Island, Black Hawk State Park, 2002 (USDA-NRCS PLANT Database)

The following is a guide to some of the many shade loving native plants that you might try in your shade gardens. Not all will work in all situations and some are hard to find at nurseries. To get you started, the plants that are shaded in **green** are some of the easiest to grow and will usually propagate well on their own.

DRY SHADE PLANTS	
Common (Botanical) Name	Comments
Agrimony ( <i>Agrimonia rostellata</i> )	
Blue-Stemmed Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago caesia</i> )	nice late summer/fall flowers
Sweet Joe Pye Weed ( <i>Eupatorium purpureum</i> )	attracts butterflies
Short's Aster ( <i>Aster shortii</i> )	attractive lavender flowers
Beak Grass ( <i>Diarrhena Americana</i> )	nice ground cover, attractive seedheads
Long-awned Wood Grass ( <i>Brachelytrum erectum</i> )	
Upland Bent Grass ( <i>Agrostis perennans</i> )	
Culver's Root ( <i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i> )	dappled light
Downy Lobelia ( <i>Lobelia puberula</i> )	
Golden- Alexanders ( <i>Zizia aurea, Z. aptera</i> )	dappled light
Downy Skullcap ( <i>Scutellaria incana</i> )	
Birdfoot Violet ( <i>Viola pedata</i> )	dappled light
Common Violet ( <i>V. sororia</i> )	host for Fritillary butterflies
Trout Lily ( <i>Erythronium americanum</i> )	showy spring flower
Hoary Mountain Mint ( <i>Pycnanthemum pycnanthemoides</i> )	spreads quickly, prefers sandy soil
Wild Indigo ( <i>Baptisia alba</i> )	dappled light, prefers sandy soils
Whorled Milkwort ( <i>Polygala verticillata</i> )	difficult to cultivate, locate
Purple Milkwort ( <i>Polygala polygama</i> )	difficult to cultivate, locate
Hairy Puccoon ( <i>Lithospermum carolinense</i> )	dappled light, difficult to locate
Black-eyed Susan ( <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> )	spreads quickly
Eastern Shooting Star ( <i>Dodecatheon meadia</i> )	dappled light, prefers sandy soils
Goatsbeard ( <i>Arunacus dioicus</i> )	deep shade
Spiderwort ( <i>Tradescantia ohioensis</i> )	spreads quickly
Black Huckleberry ( <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> )	thorny shrub, fruit for birds, needs acid soil
Snowberry ( <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> )	shrub, dappled light
Arrowwood ( <i>Viburnum dentatum</i> )	shrub, fruit for birds
Roughleaf Dogwood ( <i>Cornus drummondii</i> )	shrub, dappled light. Thicket-forming
Ninebark ( <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> )	shrub, dappled light
Common Oak Sedge ( <i>Carex pennsylvanica</i> )	
Rush ( <i>Caryx pennsylvanica</i> )	

WET SHADE PLANTS	
Common (Botanical) Name	Comments
Burr Sedge	showy seed heads
Palm Sedge	attractive foliage
Lizard's Tail	
Water Plaintain	prefers half day sun
Arrowhead	prefers half day sun
Rough Buttercup	showy flowers
Cardinal Flower	showy flowers
Joe Pye Weed	showy flowers, dappled light
Marsh Marigold	showy flowers
Mad-dog Skullcap	
Skunk Cabbage	dappled light
Monkey Flower	showy flowers
Horsetail	Dappled light
Scouring Rush	Dappled light, spreads quickly
Jewelweed	very tollerant of conditions
Heart-leaved Golden Ragwort	
Whorled Loosestrife	showy flowers
Fringed Loosestrife	showy flowers
Green Dragon	tolerant of drier soil
Jack-in-the-pulpit	tolerant of drier soil

**Dry Shade Plant: Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)**



**Wet Shade Plant: Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)**



Photos by Robert H. Mohlenbrock. USDA SCS. 1989. *Midwest wetland flora: Field office illustrated guide to plant species.* Midwest National Technical Center, Lincoln. Courtesy of [USDA NRCS Wetland Science Institute](http://www.usda.gov/nrcs/wetland-science-institute).