

growth, Steinkopf recommends ground covers such as pachysandra, vinca, dwarf hemlock, or ivy since grass doesn't do well in a heavily shaded area.

Some varieties of holly will thrive in the shade. Holly is an evergreen, which, with Baltic ivy, will give you the delight of greenery even in the snow. You must plant both a male and a female holly in order to have the red berries that attract birds.

For areas with good light, but no direct sun, two old favorite perennials, columbine and bleeding heart, are ideal. And don't forget that before the trees leaf out, some sun will reach the yard.

A glorious effect can be achieved by planting a large number of small early-flowering bulbs, such as crocus, miniature narcissus, grape hyacinth and scilla. Many of these bulbs will multiply, so your initial investment will gather interest.

The plants that thrive at the edge of a woodland receive more light than those in the shadier area, and a variety of blooming plants will thrive in the dappled shade.

"Both azaleas and rhododendrons will do well here," Lopez says, "although these broadleaf evergreens require an acid soil."

Lopez recommends using a test kit to determine your soil's Ph in the area where you want to grow holly, azaleas or rhododendrons. If a test finds your soil

lacking, she says, you can increase acidity by digging in a handful of soil sulfur each spring, and using an acid fertilizer, such as Miracid®, available at most plant centers.

Lopez also stresses the importance of conditioning the soil in a shady area using compost materials, because the plants aren't getting much sun.

And it's equally important to remember that mature trees act as umbrellas, shielding understory growth from moisture. So even in rainy weather, supplementary water may be necessary.

Other flowering perennials that do well in dappled shade are day lilies, astilbe, coral bells, bellflower and baby's breath. Astilbe will thrive either in full or partial shade.

"There are mixes of wildflower seeds suitable for shady areas," Steinkopf adds.

"You just shake the seeds over the area to be planted, cover them with a thick layer of soil, and water lightly."

These mixes do not tend to be very expensive, so even if they don't all germinate, he says, you've gotten your money's worth.

For those of you who want to plant annuals in a shady area, there's old reliable — impatiens, which comes in a greater variety of colors every spring.

Try also wax begonias, fuchsias, pansies, violas, annual lobelia and coleus.

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