

Suburban Gardener

More Than One Way To Cover The Ground

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Ground covers are becoming increasingly popular. These are low plants that spread over the ground forming a neat carpet.

They can add beauty and distinction to the landscaping around your home and at the same time help solve some troublesome landscape problems.

Also, ground covers can help cut down on maintenance.

In addition to providing a lush, luxuriant look, ground covers help prevent soil erosion on a steep bank. They can help keep weeds from encroaching on shrub beds, they help conserve moisture in the soil and they keep the soil cooler which protects shallow rooted plants.

They are good in shady areas beneath trees where grass won't grow and they can be used effectively in small or narrow areas that are difficult to mow.

They are beautiful beneath shrubs and make a handsome edging in front of shrubs. They are an important aspect of naturalized and wild plantings, too.

Ground covers are not a substitute for grass. In most situations a lawn is really the best ground cover.

Even though it needs frequent mowing it still provides the ideal surface for children to run around and play on and it makes the neatest carpeting for large open areas around a home.

There are many plants that can be considered ground cover plants. Over 200 kinds are listed in the book "Ground Cover Plants," written by Donald Wyman, who is head of the well known Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts.

Some of these are herbaceous plants that die to the ground every winter. Others are woody but leaf losing in winter.

Others are evergreen, some thrive in shade, others require a sunny spot.

THE PLANTS must be selected to fit the growing conditions. If there is a good match between the growing conditions and plant requirements, the ground covers will thrive and require little maintenance.

If the ground cover is sparse and sticky it is certainly not going to enhance the landscaping. Remember, though, that it takes several years for a ground cover planting to become established.

One of the most attractive and dependable ground covers is myrtle or periwinkle (Vinca minor). It is a low trailing vine with small lustrous evergreen leaves.

It grows in either shade or sun and is excellent under trees or shrubs or to clothe a bank.

It can be used in informal, naturalistic plantings, or is equally effective in formal or geometric beds where an occasional trimming will keep it neat and maintain the sharp edge.

In spring the myrtle vines are covered with lovely lavender-blue flowers, a delightful bonus. Spring bulbs can be planted with the myrtle for a charming effect.

Pachysandra or Japanese spurge (Pachysandra terminalis) is another dependable evergreen ground cover that grows in either dense or partial shade. It has glossy leaves and stands about six inches high. Occasionally terminal spikes of white flowers are produced.

Pachysandra spreads by underground roots and a planting soon forms a thick carpet.

English ivy (Hedera helix) is an evergreen vine that can be used for a ground cover under trees in shady areas. It will climb up the tree trunks clothing them in evergreen, too.

Because of its tendency to climb anything it encounters it should not be planted beneath shrubs.

It can be trimmed and clipped to keep it within bounds in its allotted beds.



AUTHENTIC LOOK—
Low-maintenance shutters have the authentic appearance of traditional panel and louver shutter styles.

Low-Care Shutters Authentic

The homeowner's desire for low-maintenance exterior shutters often leads him to compromise on authentic appearance.

Most homeowners recognize that shutters can provide an attractive accent for windows and doors, adding color, dimension and horizontal lines which improve a home's appearance.

But in trying to eliminate painting, they have often traded in a paint brush for an artificial. Too many low-maintenance shutters are improperly scaled and detailed, or will quickly warp or dent.

In recent years, a major window manufacturer has investigated hundreds of traditional American homes in a study of shutter styles.

The study led to the new Perma-Shield shutters. These low-maintenance shutters are available in panel and louver styles, in a choice of white or black.

Mich. Cherries Apples, Plums Plentiful

Unlike some fruits which suffered severe weather damage, Michigan apples, cherries and pears will be abundant this season, says Donald Ricks, Michigan State University agricultural economist.

Michigan farmers are harvesting large crops of both sweet and tart cherries, he reports. Most of Michigan's cherry crop is harvested in July, but the fruit is available until mid-August from northern farms.

Although the pear crop in western states is small this year, Michigan's supply is plentiful, the economist says. Buy Michigan pears from late August through September.

Apriots and plums shipped here from other states are plentiful this season. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture includes plums on its July plentiful foods list. But Michigan plums will be scarce. The Michigan plum season is from late August through September. Buy Michigan apriots from mid-July to mid-August.

Michigan blueberries and peaches will be relatively expensive home canning and freezing buys this year, Ricks says.

An unseasonable mid-June freeze severely damaged Michigan's blueberry crop, and unusually cold temperatures last winter badly depleted the peach supply.

The state's peach harvest begins in early August and runs through September. Michigan blueberries are marketed from late July through August.

FIX-IT TIP

Large areas of broken plaster in a wall needn't cause you worry. Chip away all the loose and damaged plaster and get down to sound material, even if you have to go all the way to the lath. Undercut the edges and wet thoroughly. Apply plaster in several layers, allowing each to dry before adding the next.

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