

Ornamentals Can Grow In Difficult Areas

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Whether your land is too wet, too dry, too shady or too steep, there are beautiful, hardy plants that will thrive in these conditions.

"The trick to a low-maintenance, long-lived landscape is selecting plants best suited to grow in the climate and soil conditions," says Dr. J. Robert Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Overly wet soils occur in low-lying areas and are produced by springs, a high groundwater table or nearby ponds or streams. "Consider yourself lucky if you have a wet area on your land," says Nuss. "It can support a wide range of exotic plants, many of which grow nowhere else."

Annuals that do well in shady, poorly drained areas include impatiens, sweet alyssum, scarlet sage, blue sage and verbena. Many ferns also grow in moist, shady soil. A long list of native wildflowers thrive in these conditions, including cardinal lobelia, forget-me-not, wild iris and many species of violets.

Garden centers and catalogs carry native fern and wildflower stock. "Be patient when introducing wildflowers to an area," says Nuss. "It may take a few years for them to get established and be-

come showy."

Shrubs and trees that do well in damp, shady places include alder, dogwood, pussy willow, weeping willow, magnolia and mountain laurel, Pennsylvania's state flower. Some fruit-producing shrubs, such as blueberries, also grow in partial shade if they receive half a day of sun to help flowers and fruit develop.

"Many of these plants do just as well in shady, well-drained areas," says Nuss. Other flowers that thrive in shady, but drier, soils are columbine, lily of the valley, bleeding heart, balloon flower and daylily.

Shrubs and trees that grow in well-drained shady spots include boxwood, false cypress, holly, hemlock, pine and yew. Shrubs such as barberry and cotoneaster produce colorful berries that remain during the winter and provide food for birds.

"Sunny, dry slopes present an entirely different microclimate," says Nuss. "Even during rainy periods, sloped land quickly loses water. These areas require plants that don't mind droughty conditions."

Many animals grow on sunny, dry slopes, including old favorites such as marigold, zinnia, four o'clock, geranium and cosmos. These annuals have remained popular for so long partly because they adapt well to these condi-

tions.

A lot of colorful perennials also grow in semi-arid conditions. These include yarrow, butterfly-weed, daylily, lupine and oriental poppy. Well-spaced perennials will spread and cover semi-arid spots and can be propagated by division every few years.

More exotic plants such as ornamental grasses and prickly pear cactus also are at home on dry slopes. In addition, many kinds of ground covers, such as crown-vetch and sedum, are ideal for these conditions.

"While these varieties have a high tolerance for sunny, dry areas, few plants do well when completely neglected," says Nuss. "Even drought-tolerant plants appreciate organic mulch and periodic watering during the hot summer months."

Sometimes soil composition also requires careful selection of plants. "Heavy clay soil presents a problem for plants with delicate root systems," says Nuss. "Unless you're willing to spend time adding a lot of organic matter to clay soil, it's best to stick with plants whose roots easily penetrate clay."

These include mint, coltsfoot, Siberian iris and perennial sweet pea. Trees that grow in heavy clay soil include red maple, American hornbeam, pin oak and arborvitae.

"If you want to grow annuals in clay soil, you will need to work in a generous amount of organic material," says Nuss.

To find out your soil's makeup, nutrient content and pH, have samples tested. Soil testing kits can be purchased for \$6 at Penn

State Cooperative Extension county offices or from 111 Agricultural Analytical Services Laboratory, Tower Road, University Park, PA 16802. Samples may be mailed in the accompanying envelope or delivered to the laboratory, and you will receive the results within two weeks.

Springtime On The Farm

DOVER, Del. — On May 20, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Delaware Agricultural Museum and Village will be hosting the annual *Springtime on the Farm*. This living history event re-creates the 1890s and gives visitors a feel for the era. Guides and interpreters are dressed for the time period and take part in activities related to those undertaken on a rural farm in the spring.

Demonstrations of gardening, spinning and weaving, blacksmithing, and sheep shearing (to name a few) will be on hand. Wagon rides and 19th century games are included for the young and

young at heart. Music and food round out the day's activities.

Just when you think you've seen and done it all, grab your partner, because at 4 p.m. the Exhibit Hall will be filled with dancing and games as visitors enjoy the old-fashioned barn dance. Cake-walks, square dancing and traditional music will fill the evening.

The Delaware Agricultural Museum and Village, a private, non-profit organization, is located just south of Delaware State University on Rt. 13 in Dover. Information on this event and others at the Museum is available by calling (302) 734-1618.

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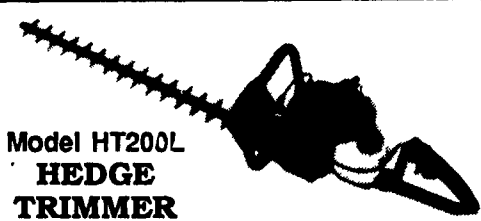
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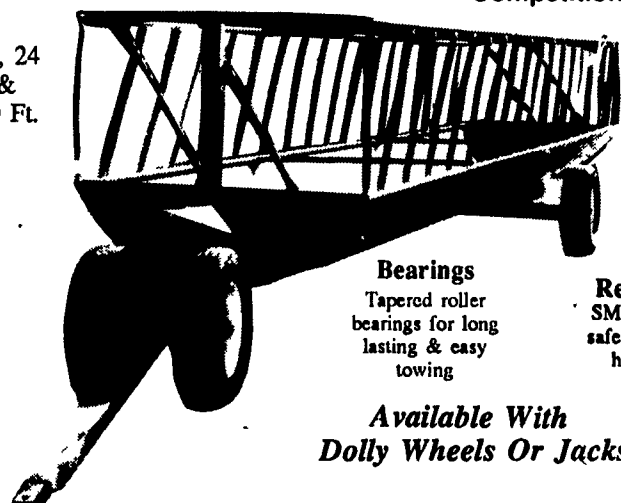
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