Cornell Cooperative Extension
Nassau County

Horticulture Program
Eisenhower Park
East Meadow, N.Y. 11554

Home Grounds Fact Sheet

Landscaping Woodland Areas

Homes built in wooded areas or where mature trees have been carefully left by the developer offer the home gardener a wonderful opportunity for naturescaping or naturalistic landscaping. Ideally, bulldozers and other heavy equipment are contained in the area where the house was or will be constructed and do not veer into treed areas. When machinery runs rampant in adjacent wooded areas (where you wish to keep trees alive), history has shown that between the resultant grade changes and soil compaction, these valued trees have but a few years left to live. Decline will not be apparent immediately, but will be over a period of years. Once this decline is visible, it's too late. On any newly developed property, examine for grade changes, especially where soil abuts tree trunks. If you suspect filling-in of soil or compaction of soil by any heavy equipment in the vicinity of large trees, act quickly or the opportunity for a woodland garden may never be possible.

If the home already exists on a wooded plot, spend some time considering how you want to make use of the property. Lawns require constant maintenance and are not always in harmony with a naturalistic setting. It is practical to plant grass only where required for play areas or where a uniform carpet of turf will give the landscape effect you desire. Plus, establishing turf in shade is not always easy.

If the plot is heavily wooded, select those trees that will be kept and get rid of those that are unnecessary or unhealthy. A consulting arborist can help you choose the trees to save and give you pointers on the care they will require. Remember that trees in a woodland are constantly subject to the law of survival of the fittest. Many on your property are or will soon be losers in the battle. Cull out the weaker trees and give the more desirable ones a better chance. Limiting competition, fertilization, insect control and careful pruning will help the remaining trees acquire their own natural beauty.

After you have cut down the unnecessary trees, you will most likely be faced with the problem of getting rid of unwanted brush and vines such as bittersweet, catbrier (Smilax), poison ivy and honeysuckle. Much of this growth can be removed mechanically by grub hoe and brush hook, but unless every last root is dug up, you will be dealing with unwanted vines for years. Before removing any of the underbrush, apply one of the currently available chemical brush killers. These growth-regulating herbicides can be used as diluted sprays on a full complement of actively-growing foliage or brushed undiluted onto the freshly cut stumps of trees and vines. Since all these herbicides are non-selective, great care must be taken to avoid off-target drift. Allow 1-3 weeks for the herbicide to move down into the roots before cutting back leaves and stems. Be sure to read the label carefully prior to application of any herbicide.

During the period of brush control, paths through the wooded portion can be planned and constructed. They may be just compressed earth or you might want to use wood or bark chips, log rounds, bluestone slabs, slate or other paving that will blend into the surroundings. These paths will be the avenues from which you view future plantings. The paths and plantings should give the illusion of wandering through quiet, secluded woodlands. To maintain this illusion, it will probably be necessary to keep the paths some distance within the property lines or to use an unobtrusive live or constructed screening.

Your woodland area will be an excellent place to use shade-loving shrubs, ground covers, bulbs, ferns and wildflowers. Many of the plants, once properly planted in this ideal natural environment, will be nearly maintenance-free.

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A Few Plants for Woodland Gardens

*** CAN GET INVASIVE**

Perennials/Ground Covers

* *Ajuga* sp.	Bugleweed
Arisaema triphyllum	Jack-in-the-pulpit
Asarum europaeum	European Ginger
Cimicifuga racemosa	Black Snakeroot
Claytonia virginica	Springbeauty
* *Convallaria majalis*	Lily-of-the-Valley
Cornus canadensis	Bunchberry Dogwood
Dicentra eximia	Wild bleedingheart
Epimedium sp.	Barrenwort
Erythronium sp.	Trout lily
Ferns	Ferns
Galax aphylla	Galax
Galium odoratum	Sweet Woodruff
Gaultheria procumbens	Wintergreen
Gaylussacia brachycera	Box Huckleberry
Hepatica sp.	Liverleaf
Hosta sp.	Plaintain Lily
Houstonia caerulea (Hedyotis)	Bluets
Iris cristata	Dwarf Crested Iris
Mertensia virginica	Virginia bluebells
Mitchella repens	Partridgeberry
* *Pachysandra terminalis*	Pachysandra
Phlox divaricata	Blue phlox
Podophyllum peltatum	Mayapple
Polemonium reptans	Jacob's Ladder
Polygonatum sp.	Solomon's-Seal
Sanguinaria canadensis	Bloodroot
Sarcococca hookeriana var. humilis	Sarcococca (Sweetbox)
Shortia galacifolia	Oconee-Bells
Smilacina racemosa	False Solomon's-Seal
Tiarella cordifolia	Foamflower
Trillium grandiflorum	Trillium/Wake-Robin

Shrubs

Abelia x grandiflora	Glossy Abelia
Amelanchier sp.	Shadbush
Aronia arbutifolia	Chokeberry
Aucuba japonica	Aucuba
Berberis julianae	Wintergreen Barberry
Clethra alnifolia	Summer Sweet
Cornus alba	Redtwig dogwood
Cornus mas	Cornelian Cherry
Corylopsis sp.	Winter Hazel
Enkianthus companulatus	Red Vein Enkianthus
Fothergilla sp.	Fothergilla
Halesia	Silver-Bell
Hamamelis sp.	Witch Hazel
Hydrangea quercifolia	Oak Leaf Hydrangea
Ilex sp.	Holly
Kalmia latifolia	Mountain Laurel
Leucothoe sp.	Drooping Leucothoe
Lindera benzoin	Spicebush
Mahonia aquifolium	Oregon Grape Holly
Nandina domestica	Hardy bamboo
Osmanthus heterophyllus	Holly osmanthus
Photinia villosa	Oriental photinia
Pieris sp.	Andromeda
Prunus laurocerasus	Cherry Laurel
Rhododendron sp.	Rhododendron
Sambucus sp.	Elderberry
Skimmia japonica	Japanese Skimmia
Taxus sp.	Yew
Vaccinium sp.	Blueberries
Viburnum sp.	Viburnum
Zenobia pulverulenta	Dusty Zenobia

For more information, consult the following publications.

- Home Grounds Fact Sheets:
  - ✔ A-2-25 Ferns for the Garden
  - ✔ D-1-3 Forty Better Ground Covers
  - ✔ D-1-8 Woody Plants for Shady Places
  - ✔ D-1-29 Tips on Choosing a Landscape Gardener