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Grow plants the way
Nature does... from seed!



Growing Vegetables, Flowers, and Herbs in the Shade

How the sun shines on your garden matters – a lot! All other factors being equal, six hours of daily sun may mean the difference between a bountiful harvest, and stretchy underproductive growth. But if you enjoy the benefits of a shady yard, there's no need to forgo the joys of gardening from seed. While it is true that fruiting plants such as tomatoes and eggplants require at least six hours of direct sunlight to yield a satisfactory harvest, many vegetables, herbs, and flowers can get by quite well with just three to four of hours of sunshine ... or even less.

Evaluate Your Sun/Shade Situation

You probably know intuitively whether you have the right conditions for sun-loving plants. Look down. If mosses and/or ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) have invaded your lawn, you'll need to find a sunnier spot for most vegetables. If the lawn flourishes it is likely that a vegetable garden will too.

Wait until deciduous trees have fully leafed out before making decisions about where to place your garden beds. Then evaluate: Starting at 9 a.m., jot down hourly notes on whether planned beds are in sun, shade, or dappled deciduous shade.



Partial Shade, or Partial Sun?

Now that you know how many hours of sunny rays your prospective garden will be catching, it will be easier to determine your planting options. Many seed catalogs/websites place little icons next to variety names or talk specifically about how much where to locate specific plants on packet backs. What, exactly, do they mean? Definitions of sun requirements generally read something like this:

Full Sun: Requiring at least 6 full hours of direct sunlight. (Many plants perform better with 8 or more hours.)

Partial Sun: Requiring 3-6 hours of sunlight. (Some sources refer to partial shade, which is roughly synonymous.)

Shade: Requiring little or no direct sun.

But, as every gardener learns sooner or later, plants don't read the books, and often defy our expectations. The all-day dappled shade cast by a deciduous tree

Getting to the Root of the Problem

Plants situated in partial shade may be hampered by roots of nearby trees, which tend to wick moisture and nutrients away from nearby crops. Slugs and snails are also more apt to cause problems in damp shade. Check often for pest damage, and be extra diligent about soil quality, amending with compost and cultivating deeply. Raised beds help to increase chances of success in shady gardens.

may or may not rule out a garden of arugula and bok choy, depending on how dense the tree canopy is.

In addition, the amount of shade your garden gets will change with the seasons. *When* the sun shines on your garden also has an effect. Three hours of direct afternoon sun is not the same as three hours of morning sun. Locating your garden where it will get the full intensity of the afternoon sun may allow you to stretch the limits.

Don't be Stymied by Shade

If you discover that your garden beds are getting less than the 6 hours of sun required by many flowers and vegetables, there are still plenty of options. Grow tomatoes in large (5 gallons or larger) containers (<http://www.reneesgardenfaq.com/hgsa/articles/tomato-container.htm>) and set them on wheels so that you can transport them to a sunny space at will. Place containers of edible flowers and herbs on a sunny deck (<http://www.reneesgardenfaq.com/hgsa/pots.htm>) for ready access to flavorful additions to soups and salads. As for those garden beds, consult the following chart for a sampling of the many seed-grown flowers, herbs, and vegetables that will thrive in less than full sun.



Shade Tolerant Vegetables and Herbs from Seed

Variety	Minimum Light Requirement	Notes
Arugula	3-4 hours	Arugula bolts in the heat, so afternoon shade may keep it productive a little longer.
Beets	4-5 hours	Roots will not be as large as beets grown in sunny spaces, but the nutritious greens tolerate partial sun well. Be sure to thin plants so they have room to grow and feed several times
Carrots	4-5 hours	Roots will not be as large.
Chard	4-5 hours	Stalks will not be as robust as those grown in full sun.
Herbs	3-4 hours	Anise hyssop, chervil, chives, cilantro, parsley and lemon balm, and even basil tolerate some shade. Sweet woodruff grows in full shade.
Kale	4-5 hours	Partial shade is helpful in getting fall kale crops started in the heat of summer.
Lettuce	3-4 hours	Try the soft leaf lettuces, such as 'Salad Bowl' or 'Oakleaf', or "mesclun" baby leaf mixes for a continuous harvest.
Parsley	3-4 hours	Cut frequently to keep parsley from sprawling.
Salad	3 hours	Bok choy, tatsoi, endive, and sorrel are a few of the salad

greens		and cooking greens that can be grown in partial shade.
Scallions	3-4 hours	Also known as green onions, this flavorful salad addition tolerates shade well.
Spinach	3-4 hours	Spinach started in fall and protected through the winter will get the benefit of sun in spring, before trees leaf out.



Shade Tolerant Flowers from Seed

Variety	Minimum Light Requirement	Notes
Balsam	2-3 hours, or dappled shade	Balsam requires ample moisture to thrive, and will not compete well with tree roots.
Coleus	Sun, dappled shade, shade	Historically a shade plant Adequate moisture is important.
Columbine	Dappled shade, shade	Perennial <i>Aquilegia</i> species are easily grown from seed, and thrive along woodland edges.
Foxglove	4-5 hours, or dappled shade	Biennial <i>Digitalis</i> species are stunning in a shady border.
Lobelia	3-4 hours	Annual lobelia benefits from afternoon shade.
Nasturtium	4-5 hours	Nasturtium plants bloom better with 6 hours of sun, but produce edible leaves and some flowers in shade.
Nicotiana	3-4 hours	Exceedingly fragrant woodland tobacco (<i>Nicotiana sylvestris</i>) tolerates shade well, but also grows in full sun.
Snapdragon	4-5 hours, or dappled shade	Snapdragons grow well in full sun, provided they get enough moisture. A spot with morning Sun and afternoon shade will help keep them from drying out.
Viola	4-5 hours, or dappled shade	The hotter the summer, the more these little beauties appreciate afternoon shade.