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Designing a Shade Garden? Consider Hostas!

by Lydia Holley

Do you have a shady area in your garden? Perhaps you have trees, or just a strip of shade along the north side of your house. If you are looking for a beautiful and reliable plant for shade, you should consider the hosta.



Hostas are interesting because they can have either blue, green, yellow or variegated foliage. They also come in many different heights and widths. Their flowers, which come in shades of white or lavender, also attract hummingbirds. Hostas can make a wonderful ground cover or they can be the focal point in a garden bed.

One of the most amusing aspects of growing hostas are the names given to the different cultivars. Small hostas have cute names such as 'Blue Mouse Ears', 'Popcorn' and 'Curly Fries'. Large hostas have commanding names such as 'Komodo Dragon' and 'T Rex'.

When choosing hostas for your garden, consider the color of the hosta leaves. Variegated hostas, or hostas with white along their edges, will lighten up a dark corner. A bit of sunshine can also be imitated by hostas with gold in their leaves. Hostas with a blue cast can be used to contrast with blooms or the foliage of other hostas or shade plants. Because hostas come in so many different color variations, it may be best to choose hostas in person so you can achieve a pattern pleasing to the eye.

In addition to variegation, color, size and height, you will also want to take texture into consideration. Some hostas have ridged leaves, while others are smooth. Some have glossy leaves, while others are dull.

If it sounds a bit intimidating, perhaps a few design suggestions will help. Start by determining which other plants you have nearby. A white variegated hosta will highlight white blooms, while a golden hosta can highlight yellow flowers. If you are using several hosta in one bed, you will also want to use solid colored hostas next to variegated ones in order to keep the bed from looking too busy. Be certain to consider placing other shade plants in your hosta bed. A bed of only hostas can not only be challenging to design, but also lack interesting contrast in form.

Hostas go completely dormant in winter, emerging in spring. Some will emerge later than others, so a little patience is required. Hostas will multiply, and they may be divided in the spring. That is a good thing, because you can rarely have too many hostas. If you run out of shady areas in the garden, you can also grow hostas in pots.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.