Great Annuals For Shade

In years past, shade gardens have often featured billowy masses of impatiens—but now a new downy mildew disease that may defoliate garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) has become active in our area. The severity of the downy mildew will no doubt vary from year to year according to variations in weather, but gardeners wishing to reduce the risk of impatiens planting failures may want to expand their garden flower repertoire. We have provided some suggestions in this pamphlet. For additional suggestions and information see also the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Floriculture Program webpage, http://ccesuffolk.org/floriculture-program, and a list of shade and part-shade annuals from Michigan State University, http://flor.hort.msu.edu/IDM/index.htm.

And Many Others

There are plenty more fantastic plants to choose from for your shade or part-shade garden. Consider browallia, alternanthera, caladium, polka-dot plant (*Hypoestes*), fuchsia, and Streptocarpella for shade—and lobelia, nicotiana, salvia, creeping zinnia (*Sanvitalia*) and sweet potato vine (*Ipomoea*) for part-shade. For more ideas see the websites mentioned on the front panel.

Looking for plants for a sunny spot? There are countless options! Try annual vinca, angelonia, petunia, geranium, marigold, zinnia, celosia, pentas, gazania, and portulaca. Ask your garden center professional or your gardening friends for some ideas and inspiration.

Watch http://ccesuffolk.org/floriculture-program for more information to come. Various shade annuals will be trialed in 2013 and 2014 with funding from New York Farm Viability Institute. Trial results, photos, and conclusions will be posted here.

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Begonia

Fibrous-rooted or wax-leaved begonia is a well-known and traditional bedding plant. This globe- or mound-shaped plant has either dark green or bronze foliage covered with white, red, pink, or coral flowers all season long. Plants are low maintenance, don’t require deadheading, and are great for landscapes. Plants can be 8-10 to 10-12 inches tall.

Another group of begonias is sometimes generically categorized as landscape types or specialty types. Some popular cultivars and series include Dragon Wing®, Baby Wing®, Whopper, BIG™, Ikon and Braveheart®. These begonias are generally more vigorous than wax-leaved begonias, have excellent landscape performance, upright and mounded habits, produce blooms all season, and require minimal maintenance. All are also great in containers and hanging baskets. Sizes can vary from 12-14 inches tall to 15-18 inches tall.

There are many other types of annual begonias for your garden, including trailing types that are perfect for hanging baskets and containers, tuberous begonias that come in a wide assortment of colors, rhizomatous or Rex begonias that are known for their unique and spectacular foliage, and cane-stemmed or angel wing begonias that have beautiful flower clusters and large wing-shaped leaves.

Coleus

Expect season-long interest from the colorful foliage of coleus. You can find coleus in a kaleidoscope of patterns and leaf colors including shades of green, red, chartreuse, bright pink, and deep purple. Leaves can be tiny (size of a quarter) to huge (size of your hand) with shapes that are rounded, strap-like, twisted, curly edged, or lobed. Some cultivars can grow over 2 feet tall, others will remain compact and short (8-10 inches tall), and others will be in between. Growth habits vary—plants may be trailing, mounded, or bushy. Use in landscapes and containers.

New Guinea Impatiens

Luckily, these impatiens (Impatiens hawkeri) are not affected by impatiens downy mildew. New Guinea impatiens are sometimes mistakenly thought to be sun plants because they perform better in sunny conditions than garden impatiens. However, New Guinea impatiens can perform equally well in shade. There are hundreds of cultivars to pick from, with flowers in pastel or bright shades of pink, red, orange, purple, red, or white. Flowers are large and showy; some can be 3 inches in diameter. Foliage can be green, dark green, bronze, or variegated. Some hybrids of New Guinea impatiens, such as SunPatiens® and Fanfare® impatiens, are also good choices. Plants can be compact (10-14 inches tall) to vigorous and spreading (2-3 feet tall), and in between. Use in landscapes, containers, and hanging baskets.

Torenia

Torenia has cute, cheery, tubular flowers and is sometimes referred to as wishbone flower because its joined pair of stamens appears similar to a wishbone. This plant will perform best in shade or part-shade and in cooler areas. If properly sited, it will flower profusely from early/mid-summer until frost. Flower petals can be shades of burgundy, pink, rose, lavender, white, yellow or orange with varying throat colors. Plants can reach heights of 6-12 inches. Use in landscape plantings, containers, and hanging baskets.