

Native Shade Gardens in South Carolina

Create a cool, beautiful refuge—and support biodiversity, too!

We live in a hot, humid state—making shady gardens not just beautiful, but blissfully cool. Stepping into a shaded garden on a sweltering summer day offers a refreshing escape, where dappled light, cool air, and lush greenery soothe the senses. If you've got a shady spot, you can recreate the feel of a cove forest—like those along the Natural Heritage Trail at the South Carolina Botanical Garden—rich with native plants, pollinators, and birdsong. With thoughtful plant choices—many of which you can find at our native plant sale—your garden can become a peaceful refuge that looks good year-round and supports local ecosystems.



Anchor with Evergreens

Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) – Thrives in moist, rich soils

Ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*) – Great for dry, rocky spots

Pipsissewa (*Chimaphila maculata*) – A fragrant flowering evergreen that spreads by rhizomes

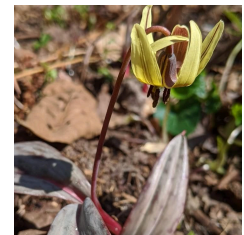
Add Some Spring Sparkle

Trout lily (*Erythronium umbilicatum*)

- Early bloomer (Feb), dappled leaves, yellow nodding flowers
- Important food source for native bees, bee flies, and beetles

Foam flower (*Tiarella austrina*)

- Blooms late April–early May
- Plant in drifts for a magical “foamy mist” effect



Finish Strong with Summer Blooms

Bottlebrush buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*)

- Big and bold: 8–12 ft tall and 8–15 ft wide
- Tall panicles of small tubular white flowers
- Loved by pollinators and people alike!

Why Plant a Native Shade Garden?

A shade garden with native plants doesn't just offer cool relief—it enhances your space with texture, color, and structure. It also creates habitat for wildlife, helps native pollinators thrive, and contributes to local biodiversity. With the right plants in the right place, your shady retreat becomes a haven—for you and for nature.

Photo credits: Sue Watts

Adapted from: <https://www.scnps.org/get-ready-to-have-it-made-in-the-shade>