

HOME & GARDEN

Ground covers blanket trouble spots

By PAT LEUCHTMAN
Recorder Columnist

A beautiful, well-kept lawn is an enviable thing, but sometimes circumstance will make it an impossibility. Perhaps there is too much shade or a bank that is too steep to mow easily or perhaps there is just not enough time to maintain that beautiful lawn. However, beauty need not be forsaken; ground covers can save the day. It is possible to find a ground cover that will grow on any site and suit any taste.

Many ground covers have flowers and it is possible to create a really spectacular vision if you coordinate your ground cover planting with the rest of your landscaping plan. For instance, if a dogwood is a focal point in your garden, you might choose to underplant it with moss pinks which bloom at the same time.

With or without flowers, ground covers can mean a low maintenance garden, but

that does not mean that there is not a variety to choose from. You can have a dense mat only an inch high like arabis procurrens or crown vetch which reaches a height of two feet and has saved many a steep bank from the ravages of erosion.

Pachysandra is one of the best ground covers and it is often used in shady areas where nothing else will grow, but it need not be limited to shady locations; it will also thrive in the sun. Most people are familiar with the solid green pachysandra but there is also "Silveredge" which has a narrow white margin around its light green leaves. This variegated form is particularly attractive planted at the base of evergreens where it will relieve the dense greenery.

Aromatic wintergreen (gaultheria procumbens) is a plant that does require shade to do its best. It is easy to care for because it is very hardy and will tolerate an acid soil. It is only four inches high

BETWEEN THE ROWS

with bright evergreen leaves. It has white flowers which are followed by red berries that will last all through the winter.

Some ground covers require full sun. Prostrate baby's breath is another plant that is only four inches high, but it is covered with airy pink blossoms all spring and summer. It requires a well drained, neutral soil and is hardy.

Achillea tomentosa is a dwarf achillea only reaching a height of about eight inches and in May and June it is covered with clusters of bright yellow flowers. It does not need a rich soil, but it should be well drained.

There are several junipers that make excellent ground covers on a sunny bank. Blue Rug grows densely to a height of six inches and does indeed make a handsome

blue rug or it can cascade over a stone wall. Sargent juniper has a steel blue, sharply needled foliage a foot high and the Waukegan juniper grows six to nine inches high and in the fall and winter its foliage becomes tinted a plum color which makes an exciting color accent in the winter landscape.

Some ground covers are so agreeable that they will be happy in the sun or in partial shade. Ajuga grows well in the shade, but it does reach its finest color when grown in the sun. It comes in several varieties, Metallica Crispa which has bronze foliage and deep blue flowers, or Pink Beauty which has delicate pink flowers in May and June.

Arabis Procurrens is an easily grown plant. Though the foliage is only an inch high, in May and June it sends up 10-inch stems covered with sprays of lovely white flowers. It will do well even in poor dry

soils, something good to know in these days of drought.

Alcheilla vulgaris, Lady's Mantle, is a low growing evergreen plant that makes a sturdy ground cover, but it is also valuable for its flowers. These delicate 18-inch sprays appear in July and can be used as a cut flower or they can be dried.

There are many others. Wayside Garden catalog devotes eight pages to ground covers alone. Bishop's Weed is another silver edge plant and its variegated habit makes it of special interest. Bearberry is an evergreen with tiny glossy leaves that will form a dense mat on even the poorest soils. Pale pink flowers in May are followed by red berries in the fall. It is extremely hardy. There is a potentilla, cinquefoil, that grows only three inches high and in June and July it is covered with bright yellow strawberry-like flowers. It is just as attractive when it is not blooming as when it is.



We're a nation of gardeners

By EARL ARONSON
AP Newsfeatures

With the curtain falling on another season of backyard activity, word comes that more Americans planted vegetable gardens in 1981 than ever before in U.S. history.

About 38 million American households planted food gardens, an increase of 4 million over 1980.

Figures based on a nationwide survey sponsored by Gardens for All, National Association for Gardening, indicated that 47 percent of all households planted a vegetable garden. This was 4 percent more than last year.

Addressing the Garden Writers of America in Boston, David Schaefer, vice president of Gardens for All, based in Burlington, Vt., said: "Just as war-year pressures produced the Victory Garden, today's many uncertainties and changing values are creating the Independence Garden. People seem to be rebuilding America backyard by backyard."

"Much of the increase can be attributed to young, college-educated people setting up households in the suburbs and the growth areas of the Sunbelt and West."

Gardens for All President Jack Robinson analyzed the study this way:

"All kinds of gardening — flower, lawn care, indoor houseplants — are up significantly in our survey this year. Even those areas that had shown no growth or declined recently have turned around."

"People want to do more for themselves and make the best of their property. The ability to be creative and productive with what you have at home is a simple gift that is rediscovered whenever we experience tough times."

The summer survey, by the Gallup Organization, covered 3,000 households.

"Just as war-year pressures produced the Victory Garden, today's many uncertainties and changing values are creating the Independence Garden."

— David Schaefer

It also noted that:

In addition to regular vegetable gardens, 7 million households grew some vegetables in containers.

Saving money, better tasting food, and enjoyment are listed by gardeners as principal reasons for gardening. Those who do not garden say they don't have the time or have no space.

Translated into retail value, home garden production was worth \$16 billion.

Miniature Pumpkin

A pumpkin only 3 inches high, 4 inches in diameter and weighing 11 ounces has been grown by Emil Dandar of Langhorne Gables, Pa. He hopes it will be recognized as the world's smallest pumpkin.

Emil and Helen Dandar raise the sugar variety of pumpkin and have collaborated in a book with 312 pumpkin recipes.

Scott Guiser, a Pennsylvania University Cooperative Extension Service, agent, identified the little pumpkin as of the Cucurbita Pepo variety.

Dandar picked the pumpkin from the vine in November of 1980 and froze it, "for future reference."