

Sunny

Heavy Soils

Shady

nb: not much will grow well in really in really hot dry spots

Drier



Wetter

- Crocosmia
- Helenium
- Thalictrum
- Rudbeckia
- Aster
- Hemerocalis
- Spirea
- Eupatorium
- Acanthus
- Berberis
- Camassia
- Wiegela
- Ajuga
- Buxus
- Lysimachia
- Narcissus
- Salix
- Lamium
- Ribes
- Japanese Anemone
- Alchemilla Mollis
- Magnolia
- Ligularia
- Ivy
- Bergenia
- Digitalis
- Cotoneaster
- Dryopteris
- Acer
- Snowdrops
- Ferns

rule of thumb
Our/guide to the types of plants you want & those you don't!

Having the right plant in the right place makes for both a better garden and one that is more likely to look after itself; which should mean there is less unwanted garden maintenance for you to do.

Bakes like concrete

The problem with heavy clay soils are that in winter, they become an airless compact claggy boggy place and in summer you need a pneumatic drill to dig - neither of which is any good for growing any type of plant! So if you have pure clay and a sunny spot, you will not have a thriving border unless you dig lots of manure/leaf mould/ ground conditioner in. If you do this many plants will thrive (see generally good soil pdf).

Or use containers to plant in or perhaps, have this as the place for your patio instead!

PLANTS THAT WILL GROW:

Although, they might not be as spectacular as they should be; include Asters, Heleniums, Crocosmia Tulips and Daffodils (just).

Sunny but damp soils

You have sunshine and moisture, clay is a fairly fertile soil but the dense heavy claggy soil will impede plant growth. Adding ground conditioner will turn this into a good soil, but if not, then expect slower growth rates and probably less showy displays of flowers.

TRY TO AVOID:

Most bulbs (they will rot in the winter), plants that are loved by snails and slugs, many spring flowering plants as the soil is too cold and damp for them when they want to flower.

YOU CAN USE:

Viburnum, Chaenomeles (it's thorny though), Aucuba, Berberis (thorny!), Acer, Magnolia, Cornus, Foxgloves, Bergenia, Snowdrops, and Fritillaria Meleagris

Shadier but damp

As the light levels fall, you need to use tough shrubs and plants that can cope with the dual conditions of shade and a soil that is likely to remain cold and damp all winter. It is the combination of the cold & the wet that will kill off your plants.

Hence why bulbs won't normally thrive - the cold and wet rots the bulbs in the ground. Forget me not will grow well, but will probably only last a couple of years, but it does self seed readily.

TRY TO AVOID:

Lush green foliage type plants, plants with big green leaves or soft delicate looking foliage - as these emerge in the spring, lurking slugs will quickly pounce and decimate them.

YOU CAN USE:

Ivy, Forsythia, Ajuga, Aucuba, Hydrangeas, Mahonia, Rodgersia, Ferns, Japanese Anemones, Wood Anemone, and Lamiums

Shaded and dry

This ground will be pretty similar to that in a sunny site, in that although there is shade, the soil will most likely be hard, compact and tough to dig. You will most likely need to jump up & down on the fork to get it into the ground...if this is the case, how will a plant push its roots through that!

So the upshot is this, you have lots of tough digging in store to loosen the soil and then you need to add barrow loads of rich moist manure if you want anything to grow. OR you decide this area's best use is as a utility area or for the compost heap or it's where you put the kids toys in winter.

IF YOU DO WANT TO PLANT:

You want the toughest plants and shrubs, their fast growth will be held in check by the tough conditions, so; Anything that thrives in dry shade, but you will need to water regularly for the first couple of years to give the plant a chance to gain any sort of foothold.