

Sunny

Thin Soils

Shady

Drier



Wetter

Gypsophilia

Eryngium

Echinops

Drier

Hypericum

Dryopteris

Buddleja

Hibiscus

Sedum

Acanthus

Bergenia

Kniphophia

Papaver

Vinca

Hebe

Perovskia

Philadelphus

Campanula

Deutzia

Polystichum

Alliums

Achillea

Verbascum

Iris

Aucuba

Ivy

Salvia

Scabiosa

Crocus

Lilac

Forstythia

Sarcococca

Buxus

Ligustrum

Tulips

Dianthus

Anemone

Mahonia

Meconopsis

nb: Poor soils tend not to be moisture retentive - hence why there aren't a lot of plants at the bottom.

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.

Really sunny sites

As with sandy soils, these thin or stony soils don't retain moisture well and are generally lacking in plant nutrients. You need to use plants that are well suited to desert like conditions. As the soil is thin or stony, shallow rooted plants are easier to get in the ground - less deep digging required!

TRY TO AVOID:

Plants with big showy flowers or large leaves; Bedding plants; 'food hungry' plants like fruits; vegetables; Dahlias, Roses and Lilies.

YOU CAN USE:

Plants that have silvery leaves; plants with furry leaves, thin stemmed or wiry stems. Plants with fleshy roots, plants with thick succulent leaves that retain any available moisture are all good choices. Most grasses, annuals and plants with small papery delicate flowers should also grow well.

Mostly sunny

As per for sunny sites, the flowering intensity of the plants you use may be reduced as there is more shade.

TRY TO AVOID:

Plants that require a nutrient rich soil to perform, they will grow in this type of soil, but you will need to regularly add mulches and manure to the soil to keep them looking their best. Which is a lot of work, so try planting these in their place....

YOU CAN USE:

As per the sunny sites, but look also for plants with tough looking leaves or shiny leaves or really tiny leaves - these prevent moisture being lost so quickly. Tough drought tolerant shrubs, like Lilac, Philadelphus, Euonymus, Hebes, Salvias, Phormiums, Miscanthus, Euphorbias and Spirea.

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 doesn't have much food in it. If you impose your planting scheme rather than work with the conditions, you will either have poor insipid looking plants or you will need to add lots and lots of manure and mulch to the soil frequently.

TRY TO AVOID:

Lush green foliage type plants such as Ligularia or Hosta, plants with big green leaves or soft delicate looking foliage that will quickly wilt.

YOU CAN USE:

Winter, spring and autumn flowering bulbs, but not Tulips or Daffodils as these need to be planted 10cm deep, which will be difficult in a thin soil! Tougher plants that thrive in the shade like Box, Ivy, Aucuba, Sarcococca, Vinca, Epimedium and Hypericums. There are also Ferns that will cope. Bear in mind though you will probably need to give these plants a bit of TLC until they have established themselves.

Shaded and dry

This is probably one of the most difficult areas to try to grow anything in, no sun, no moisture and not much in the way of soil nutrients. So the reality is you probably need to rethink planting anything here. Maybe this is the spot for the shed or the bins for example. If you do want to grow plants here, then it would be advisable to use pots or a raised bed - that way you only have to contend with drier shade. There are loads of wonderful plants that will thrive in those conditions. If you do decide to plug away and plant, then you will need to add mulch and manure to the soil before you plant - and lots of it!

YOU CAN USE:

You want the toughest plants and shrubs, their fast growth will be held in check by the tough conditions, so; They must be shade tolerant; but, fast growing, good for naturalising; good for ground cover; speed spreaders and even triffids are generally OK here. As are plants with tough leathery foliage. See our web-site for lists of these types of plants.