

## Dry Shade

Growing in shade challenges plants because of the limited availability of light which is required for photosynthesis (the cunning way plants make their food from sunlight). Add to that a shortage of moisture, then a plant is really up against it, so it's surprising any plants can tolerate dry shade. Fortunately a few can, though many grow more happily when there is more moisture.

In woods and grasslands the trees cast shade, often in the process taking up much of the available moisture, so our recommendations for dry shade cover shrubs, climbers and ground cover.

### Evergreen Shrubs

*Aucuba japonica* – the Spotted Laurel is an unfussy shrub – slow-growing, tolerant of a wide range of soils, happy in the sun where its yellow spots give the best colour, and contented in dry shade where it cheers up dark corners and hedge-bottoms. It can be grown as a hedge itself and either clipped to shape or left to grow more loosely.

*Euonymus fortunei* varieties, such as *E. fortunei* 'Silver Queen' whose white and green variegated leaves become tinged with pink in winter.

*Fatsia japonica* – its large, glossy, hand-shaped leaves cheer up dark corners. Mulching the root to protect from frost is recommended as a frost-damaged plant can then regenerate from the root. Keep well-watered until it is established.

*Ilex aquifolium* – the Holly, which is good in shade, partial shade or sun.

*Skimmia japonica* – a valuable plant because its red berries last all autumn winter, often until the flowers appear the following spring. Prefers neutral to acid soil, but is happy on heavy clay. Plant both male and female plants for the best display of berries.

### Climbers

*Euonymus fortunei* varieties, such as *E. fortunei* 'Silver Queen' whose white and green variegated leaves become tinged with pink in winter, can be trained against a wall in partial shade.

*Hedera helix* and *Hedera colchica* varieties – the Ivies thrive in shade and are excellent grown on shady or north-facing walls. They come in such a range of leaf shapes, sizes and variegation and vein pattern that preference is subjective.

### Ground Cover

The Ivies make very effective ground cover in dry shade, but our favourite is *Pachysandra terminalis* – a very dwarf evergreen shrub, which spreads to make dense ground cover beneath larger shrubs and trees. It is happiest on acid soil in full or partial shade.