

Groundcovers for invasive weed control

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The best defense against invasive weeds are dense plantings of perennials so that the annual weeds have no opportunity to get established. Multiple layers of plantings are desirable for diversity and visual interest, but it is the ground level that is most often neglected in planting plans that focus on shrubs and trees. The native groundcovers described here are all deer resistant and provide benefits for our native pollinators and birds while crowding out weeds.

Low ground covers for full sun to part shade

Moss phlox (*Phlox subulata*) is readily available and very tolerant of poor soil conditions. There are a wide variety of colors from including purple, blue, pink and white that bloom in early spring. After the blooming period it stays green all summer and through the fall. It forms a deer resistant, drought and heat tolerant cover or garden edging. It will take lots of abuse and can even be mowed after flowering.



Golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*) is an adaptable groundcover for sunny or part shade areas. It has yellow flowers in the spring and then after blooming the wide heart-shaped leaves form a groundcover. It spreads rapidly, even aggressively in favorable locations if not managed so is best used for large areas. It is also deer and rabbit resistant.



Roundleaf ragwort (*Packera obovate*)- Similar to its cousin *Packera aurea*, but with smaller round leaf and can withstand drier full sun conditions. Naturalizes into large colonies by both self-seeding and stolons. But does not spread as aggressively as *Packera aurea*.



Golden fleece autumn goldenrod (*Solidago sphacelata* 'Golden Fleece')- Another excellent deer-resistant groundcover. This cultivar was introduced by Mt. Cuba Center. It has semi-evergreen leaves and reaches about 18" tall. Arching panicles of dense-packed flowers bloom late summer into fall. It serves as a high value late season nectar and pollen source for bees and butterflies and a seed source for many birds.



Low ground covers for Shade to part shade

For those shady areas under trees, we have many native options for beautiful groundcovers. For best success over many years, mix a variety of groundcovers or mix with ferns or heucheras for even greater garden interest. These are all good alternatives to the Japanese pachysandra. The species listed here are all deer resistant.

The native low sedges such as **Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)** or **plaintain-leaf sedge (*Carex plantaginea*)** are beautiful for edging or under trees. Both grow 6-10" high and are semi-evergreen.



Plantain-leaf sedge used as groundcover under tree at Mt Cuba Center

Other low groundcovers that bloom in the spring and then remain green all year or late into the fall include foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), goldenstar (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), Allegheny pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*), alumroots (*Heuchera* sp.) and wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) has beautiful dense white-to-pink flowers in spring. There are many variety varieties with a range of attractive leaf coloration which provide a semi-evergreen ground cover. It is deer and rabbit resistant.



Goldenstar (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) has daisy-like, bright yellow flowers in the spring and forms a dense semi-evergreen dense groundcover. It grows well under and around trees, through rock gardens, or for a border edge.



Allegheny pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*) is also deer resistant semi-evergreen with very attractive seasonal interest. It is a popular ground cover for shady areas under trees, around shrubs or along walkways.



Alumroot or coralbells (*Heuchera* sp.) There are many varieties of alumroot which are widely available. They are evergreen, deer resistant and can be mixed and matched for a wide variety of leaf colors, shapes, sizes and textures.



Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) has interesting heart-shaped leaves that form a dense groundcover. It is easily grown, but is a slow spreader.



Mixed planting example of Pennsylvania sedge and foamflower.

