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## Seeking Out the Shade

With the temperatures rising and sunlight getting more intense, it's time to talk about shade. Shade is the blocking of sunlight by plants or structures. Some plants will give off no shade, while others can tower over nearby things. Mastery over shade will not only make your landscape more successful but can also make your living space more comfortable and result in lower utility payments. Trees will be the first thing people think of when discussing shade and plants, but not all trees will be equally good at creating shade. Trees can be roughly split into two groups – shade trees, and ornamental trees. Ornamental trees have some quality that makes them appealing, but these trees will not grow large enough to have a significant impact on shading your house. Shade trees will grow to a decent size that will produce enough shade to keep your house cooler during the summer months. Some of the most common shade trees in our area that would work well in your landscape include sweetgums, American elms, sugar maples, and many different species of oaks. Other good shade trees that deserve more recognition include tulip poplars, ironwoods, and American hophornbeam.

Once you've got a shady situation, gardening becomes a little trickier. Most plants will need at least partial sun, which is defined as 4 hours of full sunlight. Often, this will occur as dappled light between the branches of taller trees. Most plants that are labeled as full sun could potentially survive in partial sun situations, but they will not grow as large as the tag indicates, and will often not look as nice. You are better off looking for plants that grow naturally in shadier environments, which could include hostas, Solomon's seal, astilbe, coral bells, and many other shade-loving perennials. Fitting the plant to the site will result in a more successful landscape.

If you are growing produce, all fruiting plants will need full sun to be at their most productive. This includes fruiting vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. If your vegetable garden is too shady, these plants will not produce enough to warrant the time spent on them. Instead, opt

for root or leaf vegetables, like potatoes, radishes, carrots, lettuce, kale or cabbage. These plants are all cool-season plants, which means that they cannot tolerate the excessive heat that strong sunlight can produce. In many cases, the shadier the better, as excessive light and heat can cause leaf vegetables like lettuce and spinach to quickly go to seed, a process known as bolting. Bolting adds bitterness to the leaves, which can make them unpalatable to most people. Luckily, leaf vegetables in shade will rarely if ever bolt.

Shade can also help prevent heat-related illness while enjoying or working in your garden. It's important to take frequent breaks when working outside in excessively hot conditions – most of the time, these breaks will occur in the shade of trees. You can also use clothing to create artificial shade and decrease the possibility of heat-related sickness. A wide-brimmed garden hat will keep the sun off of your head, which will keep you cooler and also prevent sunburn. Using different types of shade will not only keep you safe but also increase the likelihood of you enjoying your garden.

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