

Shade Garden



Come see the animals in our gardens!



A retreat from the sun can be found in the Virginia Zoo's Shade Garden. Towering oak trees cool the air and filter the sunlight to create a refreshing habitat for plants, people, and animals. In the shade, foliage color and texture take precedence over flowers. Here, the low, spreading branches of the oaks bring the canopy down to meet shade-loving shrubs and perennials.

A sampling of our shady plant pallet includes:

- White flowering '**Annabelle**' hydrangeas
- Lavender, spidery flowered '**Koromo Shikibu**' azalea
- Finely textured **gold box honeysuckle** (*Lonicera nitida* 'Baggesen's Gold')
- Evergreen clumps of **cast iron plant** (*Aspidistra elatior*)
- Evergreen **tassel fern** (*Polystichum polylepharum*)
- Spring blooming, fuchsia-colored, **hardy orchids** (*Bletilla striata*)
- Gold and green '**Great Expectations**' and '**Inniswood**' hostas

And what would a Zoo garden be without leopards? Evergreen **leopard plants** that is. This genus, once known as *Ligularia* and now as *Farfugium*, offers fascinating foliage topped in late summer with clusters of small yellow flowers. As with the cat, you can tell the leopard plant by its spots: round green leaves with yellow spots and ruffled green leaves with yellow spots. Then, there are the ones with warty, frog-like texture, or with huge, shiny green leaves. There are plenty of leopards to choose from for your own shady jungle.

Another group of evergreen perennials particularly suited to dry shade are the **hellebores**. Add the facts that they bloom in winter and spread gradually by seedlings, and they are practically perfect. Even the stinking hellebore does not smell bad enough to avoid. Its lime green flowers are pretty in the garden or in arrangements. The hellebores known as the Christmas rose and Lenten rose were given more flattering common names that reflect their bloom time rather than their scent or flower form.

For brighter colors in the shade, **daffodils, caladiums, impatiens, coleus, begonias**, and even lime green **sweet potato vine** can be sprinkled among the perennials and shrubs like fashion accessories.

Shade gardens invite us to experience the many shades of shadow, of green, of texture, and of form. Subtly cool!