



## Groundcovers

OH 55

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**Soil Preparation:** In the planting area, remove all sod and till the soil to at least 6 inches in depth. Heavy, clay-type soils are often moist and should be drained before planting. Add organic material to heavy soils to improve aeration, water penetration, and infiltration. Organic materials---such as leaf mold, compost, well rotted manure, peat moss, sawdust, or similar materials--should be incorporated in liberal amounts. The same materials can be mixed with light, sandy soils to aid in retaining moisture.

To determine the pH and fertility levels of the planting site, have the soil tested prior to planting. The majority of plants thrive in a slightly acid to neutral soil. This means a pH range of 6.0 to 7.0. If the pH level needs to be adjusted, it should be done prior to planting. Soil test report recommendations will indicate the type and rate of chemicals to use to properly correct the pH. Commercial fertilizers such as 4-12-4, 5-10-10, etc. should be applied annually at the rate of 2 to 4 pounds per 100 square feet unless otherwise specified on the soil test report.

**Planting:** Most ground cover plants can be planted any time during the growing season. Spring and fall are the seasons when most planting is done; however, many ground covers are grown in containers and may be planted throughout the summer. Spacing between plants depends on the habit of the plant, its rate of growth, the immediate effect desired and plant cost. Plants such as ivy, pachysandra, or myrtle are usually planted on 1-foot centers, while cotoneaster, junipers, and euonymus are placed 3 feet apart. If an immediate effect is desired, closer spacing is necessary. Banks may be stabilized with erosion control fabrics, or conservation grass mix, until ground cover plants are established.

**Watering:** Water plants at regular intervals until they are well established and also during dry weather after establishment. Apply enough water each time to thoroughly wet the soil to the base of the root system. Use of lawn sprinklers or soaker hoses are usually more efficient than watering by hand with a hose.

**Weeding:** Weed growth may be reduced by mulching the soil around the plants with materials such as peat moss, sawdust or wood chips, pine or hardwood bark, or others that may be available. Establishment of plants is usually faster as a result of mulching, because of more even soil temperatures and a conservation of soil moisture. The use of sawdust, wood chips, or corn cobs as a mulch will require an additional application of nitrogen fertilizer at the rate mentioned previously. Pre-emergence herbicides are available to control weeds as the seeds germinate. Herbicides must be applied yearly until the ground cover fills in enough to shade out weeds.

**Pruning:** At planting time, many ground covers may be pruned by one-half or more to encourage greater branch development and a more dense growth. Pruning causes buds to break from the base or along the main stem of the plant. Ivy or myrtle with long trailing stems are examples of plants that may be cut back at planting. Subsequent pruning in later years is necessary only to remove unhealthy tissue and awkward or straggling branches, or to keep a plant from becoming too invasive. Some established plants such as ivy, pachysandra, and euonymus require occasional cutting back of the tops to keep the beds vigorous, neat, and more disease free.

Key: S = Shrub, HP = Herbaceous Perennial, V = Vine

Grow in shade (\*Tolerate Heavy Shade)

Aegopodium (Goutweed) - HP  
Ajuga - HP  
Bergenia - HP  
Christmas Painted Fern - HP  
Daylily (Tawny) - HP  
Epimedium\* - HP  
Euonymus Fortunei - S  
Fern\* - HP  
Hosta - HP  
Lamium - HP  
Lily of the Valley\* - HP  
Myrtle (Vinca)\* - HP  
Pachysandra\* - HP  
Sweet Woodruff\* - HP  
Violets\* - HP  
Virginia Creeper\* - HP  
Wild Ginger - HP

Evergreen foliage

Bergenia - HP  
Creeping Phlox - HP  
Dianthus - HP  
Euonymus - S  
Juniper - S  
Microbiota - S  
Myrtle (Vinca) - HP  
Pachysandra - HP  
Snow in Summer - HP

Flowering

Ajuga - HP  
Bergenia - HP  
Candytuft - HP  
Coral Bells - HP

Cranesbill Geranium - HP  
Creeping Phlox - HP  
Crown Vetch - HP  
Daylily - HP  
Dianthus - HP  
Forsythia - S  
Hall's Honeysuckle - V  
Hosta - HP  
Lily of the Valley - HP  
Monarda - HP  
Myrtle (Vinca) - HP  
Potentilla - S  
Sedums - HP  
Serbian Bellflower - HP  
Snow in Summer - HP  
Spireas (Dwarf) - S  
Sweet Woodruff - HP

Colored foliage

Aegopodium (Goutweed) - HP  
Artemesia - HP  
Blue Lyme Grass - HP  
Crimson Pygmy Barberry - S  
Dianthus - HP  
Festuca Grass - HP  
Hosta - HP  
Snow in Summer - HP

Grow in sun

Ajuga - HP  
Arabis - HP  
Artemesia - HP  
Astilbe (Pumila) - HP  
Bergenia - HP  
Coral Bells - HP

Crown Vetch - HP  
Cotoneaster - S  
Cranesbill Geranium - HP  
Creeping Phlox - HP  
Daylily - HP  
Euonymus - S  
Forsythia - S  
Hall's Honeysuckle - V  
Hens and Chicks - HP  
Juniper (Horizontalis) - S  
Lysimachia - HP  
Myrtle (Vinca) - HP  
Polygonium - HP  
Potentilla - S  
Rugosa Rose - S  
Santolina - HP  
Sedums - HP  
Snow in Summer - HP  
Spireas (Dwarf) - S  
Virginia Creeper - V  
Woolly Yarrow - HP

Banks/slopes

Cranberry Cotoneaster - S  
Crown Vetch - HP  
Ivy - V  
Five-leaf Akebia - V  
Hall's Honeysuckle - V  
Juniper - S  
Potentilla - S  
Purple Wintercreeper - S  
Rockspray Cotoneaster - S  
Rugosa Rose - S  
Scotch Heather - S

(Adapted from leaflets by Elton Smith, Ohio State University; Flowerland, Lansing, Michigan)