

Forsyth Park Shade Garden Plant Guide

Beneath the sweeping canopy of Forsyth Park’s historic live oaks, the Shade Garden offers a place of quiet reflection and nature-forward exploration. Designed to thrive in filtered sunlight and Savannah’s coastal climate, the plants featured here demonstrate how thoughtful selection supports both beauty and ecological function.

Established in 2026 through a partnership between the City of Savannah and the Trustees’ Garden Club, the Shade Garden serves as a peaceful retreat and a living classroom — showcasing species that contribute to soil health, habitat value, and seasonal interest beneath the trees.

Plants Featured

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autumn Chiffon Encore Azalea <i>Rhododendron ‘Robled’</i>	This reblooming azalea produces soft blush-pink flowers in spring, with repeat blooms extending into fall. Well-suited to partial shade, it offers long-lasting seasonal color in Southern landscapes. Encore varieties are valued in Georgia gardens for their heat tolerance and dependable performance beneath tree canopies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autumn Fern ‘Brilliance’ <i>Dryopteris erythrosora ‘Brilliance’</i>	Coppery-red new fronds emerge in spring before maturing to deep green, giving this fern subtle seasonal variation. It thrives in moist, well-drained soil and performs beautifully beneath live oaks. Its year-round texture makes it a reliable foundation plant in shaded Southeastern gardens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autumn Ivory Encore Azalea <i>Rhododendron ‘Roblev’</i>	Crisp white blooms brighten shaded beds in spring and again later in the growing season. Its evergreen foliage provides structure throughout the year, while repeat flowering extends visual interest. This adaptable azalea performs well in filtered sunlight common to Savannah landscapes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autumn Starburst Encore Azalea <i>Rhododendron ‘Robleze’</i>	Featuring white flowers edged with soft pink, this variety adds refined contrast to woodland plantings. Like other Encore azaleas, it reblooms beyond the traditional spring cycle. Its compact form and tolerance for partial shade make it a versatile choice beneath mature trees.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bugleweed 'Catlin's Giant' <i>Ajuga reptans 'Catlin's Giant'</i> 	<p>This low-growing groundcover forms dense mats of glossy foliage topped with blue flower spikes in spring. Ideal for shaded areas, it helps stabilize soil and suppress weeds. Its bold leaf size distinguishes it from smaller ajuga varieties</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coontie Palm <i>Zamia integrifolia</i> 	<p>Native to the Southeastern United States. Often mistaken for a small palm, coontie is actually a cycad — one of the oldest plant lineages on earth. It thrives in partial shade and sandy soils and serves as the host plant for the Atala butterfly, supporting regional pollinator habitat.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crystal Falls Mondo <i>Ophiopogon jaburan 'HOCF'</i> 	<p>With arching, dark green foliage and a graceful, fountain-like form, Crystal Falls mondo adds movement to shaded plantings. It performs reliably in Savannah's humidity and mild winters. Its fine texture contrasts beautifully with broader-leaved companions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dooley Hydrangea <i>Hydrangea macrophylla 'Dooley'</i> 	<p>This classic Southern hydrangea produces large blue flower clusters when grown in acidic soil. Thriving in morning sun and afternoon shade, it has become a staple of Georgia landscapes. The cultivar is commonly associated with University of Georgia Coach Vince Dooley, an avid gardener who helped popularize hydrangeas statewide.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwarf Mondo Grass <i>Ophiopogon japonicus 'Nanus'</i> 	<p>Forming neat, low-growing clumps, dwarf mondo grass is often used to define pathways and borders. Its fine texture and durability make it especially useful in public landscapes and shaded garden settings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellen Bosanquet Crinum Lily <i>Crinum 'Ellen Bosanquet'</i> 	<p>Named for Ellen Bosanquet, an English plantswoman associated with early ornamental breeding, this heirloom crinum produces fragrant, pink-striped blooms in</p>

	summer. A classic in Southern gardens, it is prized for its resilience, drought tolerance, and ability to thrive for decades once established. Its bold, strap-like foliage and showy flowers make it a striking focal point in perennial borders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George L. Tabor Southern Indica Azalea <i>Rhododendron indica</i> 'George L. Tabor' 	Named for Florida nurseryman George L. Taber, who helped popularize Southern Indica azaleas in the early 1900s, this evergreen shrub is a classic in historic Savannah landscapes. Its large lavender-pink blooms brighten spring gardens, while its vigorous growth and tolerance for partial shade make it ideal beneath mature trees or in layered borders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governor Mouton Camellia <i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Governor Mouton' 	Named for Alexandre Mouton, a 19th-century governor of Louisiana, this heirloom camellia produces elegant, formal pink blooms in late winter to early spring, bringing color to the garden when little else is flowering. A long-standing favorite in Southern horticulture, it thrives in shaded, well-drained settings and rewards gardeners with glossy evergreen foliage year-round.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junior Miss Camellia <i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Junior Miss' 	The name 'Junior Miss' reflects this cultivar's smaller, youthful bloom form and refined elegance. Its soft pink, semi-double flowers appear in winter, adding gentle color to shaded garden spaces when few plants are in bloom. Glossy evergreen foliage provides year-round structure, making it a dependable and graceful presence in Southern landscapes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kanjiro Camellia <i>Camellia sasanqua</i> 'Kanjiro' 	Blooming in fall, Kanjiro camellia extends the flowering season before winter varieties emerge. Its rose-pink blooms and reliable performance make it valuable for transitional color in shaded landscapes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenten Rose <i>Helleborus orientalis</i> 	Among the earliest bloomers of the year, lenten rose produces nodding flowers in late winter to early spring. It thrives in shade and maintains evergreen foliage, adding subtle seasonal interest beneath tree cover.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lily of the Nile <i>Agapanthus praecox</i> 	Tall stems topped with rounded clusters of blue flowers add vertical interest in

	summer. In coastal Georgia, it performs well in light shade and contributes strong structural form.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little White Soldiers <i>Drimiopsis maculata</i> 	Commonly called “Little White Soldiers” for its tiny, upright white flower spikes that resemble rows of miniature sentries, this shade-tolerant plant is valued for both bloom and foliage. Its spotted leaves add visual interest at ground level, while its delicate spring flowers bring subtle charm. Spreading gently over time, it serves as a reliable and textural groundcover in Southern gardens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midnight Japanese Maple <i>Acer palmatum ‘Midnight’</i> 	Deep burgundy foliage holds its color throughout the growing season. Japanese maples thrive in partial shade, where their graceful form creates a refined focal point.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natal Lily ‘Alba’ <i>Crinum moorei ‘Alba’</i> 	Native to South Africa’s Natal region, this elegant white-flowering form of <i>Crinum moorei</i> produces fragrant blooms that rise above bold, strap-like foliage in summer. The name ‘Alba’ reflects its pure white blossoms. Long-lived and resilient, it adapts beautifully to Southern climates and performs well in shaded garden settings, often thriving for decades once established.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea Foam Camellia <i>Camellia japonica ‘Sea Foam’</i> 	Pristine white blooms emerge in winter against glossy evergreen foliage. This cultivar brightens shaded landscapes during the quieter months.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft Caress Mahonia <i>Mahonia eurybracteata ‘Soft Caress’</i> 	Soft, finely textured foliage distinguishes this mahonia from traditional varieties. Yellow winter flowers and decorative berries provide multi-season interest in shade.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Wood Fern <i>Dryopteris ludoviciana</i> 	Native to the Southeastern United States. An upright, evergreen fern adapted to Georgia’s climate and soils. It contributes resilience and woodland character beneath live oaks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star Magnolia ‘Royal Star’ <i>Magnolia stellata ‘Royal Star’</i> 	This compact magnolia produces fragrant white blooms in early spring before leaves appear. It thrives in partial shade and

	offers one of the season's first floral displays.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun Hosta 'Hot Sun' <i>Hosta 'Hot Sun'</i> 	This variegated hosta tolerates more light than many traditional varieties while still thriving in partial shade. It adds bold foliage contrast and layered texture.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tractor Seat Plant <i>Farfugium japonicum var. giganteum</i> 	Large, glossy leaves give this plant its distinctive name. Thriving in moist, shaded conditions, it brings lush texture and architectural presence to the garden.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variegated Ginger Lily <i>Alpinia zerumbet 'Variegata'</i> 	Green and cream-striped foliage brightens shaded spaces. Fragrant summer flowers add height and seasonal interest in coastal Georgia.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viridis Japanese Maple <i>Acer palmatum var. dissectum 'Viridis'</i> 	Finely cut, bright green leaves cascade from this weeping form, adding softness and movement. Partial shade preserves its vibrant foliage color.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Plumbago <i>Plumbago auriculata 'Alba'</i> 	Clusters of white flowers brighten garden edges and transitional spaces. In coastal Georgia, it performs well in light shade and offers extended bloom.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuletide Camellia <i>Camellia sasanqua 'Yuletide'</i> 	Bright red flowers with golden centers bloom in late fall and early winter. This camellia provides vivid seasonal color and supports pollinators when few other plants are flowering.