

## Three Native Shrubs for Shade

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One of the appealing characteristics of North Florida and Tallahassee that draws people to this area is the abundance of trees. Lots of them. Oaks, (over 20 species!), hickory, sweetgum, basswood, beech, bay, holly, sabal palm and 7 species of pine. We are fortunate to have such diversity. These trees provide us with much needed shade to cool our houses, parking lots and picnic spots. They provide oxygen, one of the necessities of life, they act as a sponge to soak up rain water and run off, enrich our soil with fallen leaves to compost and they are exquisitely beautiful to gaze upon.

A homeowner can be challenged with all this shade and question what can be planted in the landscape that is shade tolerant. The following plants are well adapted to shade and stand out as three of the best choices.

*Agarista populifolia* or Florida Leucothoe is an outstanding specimen to add to the back of the landscape and will draw the eye to it. The weeping habit and glossy green foliage catch your attention. Growing to a height of about 12 to 15 feet, leucothoe is evergreen and multi-trunked. Tiny bell shaped blooms appear in late spring and the fragrance is that of warm honey. It can be pruned to bush form and used as a border but this requires some maintenance, it is better left alone to become a small graceful tree.

*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, Needle Palm is a rare and threatened species in our state and can be found in its native habitat at Torreya State Park just west of Tallahassee. It is quite spectacular on the hiking trails there. It adapts well to the backyard landscape as a small palm growing to

8 feet in height and as wide. Named for the needles that protrude from the trunk as it matures, needle palm makes a beautiful accent to an entryway or bird garden.

For a shade tolerant hedge nothing can compare to *Illicium parviflorum* or Ocala Anise. Fast growing, cold tolerant, insect resistant, and fragrant foliage makes this a winner. The lower branches lie down and root which makes this a great screen, with a little pruning it will fill out nicely. Mature height if left unpruned can be 12 feet. It is very attractive to birds as cover and also can be used for greenery in flower arrangements, especially at Christmas. Plant these 4 to 5 feet apart, fertilize once a year for the first few years and water during drought.

Many other plants can compliment these few and blend well with a woodland setting. Ferns, trillium, senecio, blue phlox, ginger root, fringed campion, columbine and Indian Pink. All are native and thrive in the right habitat. Shade!!

For more information about gardening in our area, visit the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension website at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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