

Recommended Plants that May Grow Under Pine Trees

Pine trees are somewhat difficult to garden beneath, partly because the soil becomes acidic as the falling needles decay, but mainly because it is usually drier than the rest of the garden, sheltered from all but drenching rains. The needles, however, create natural mulch that shades the soil and discourages weeds and, despite the acidity and dryness, makes for a variety of plant choices you can grow under your pine trees.

Shrubs and Small Trees

Drought tolerant shrubs include Oregon grape and flowering quince. With extra water, however, you can easily grow rhododendrons and azaleas. If your pine is tall enough, you can remove the lower limbs and plant understory trees such as Japanese maple, stewartia, kousa dogwood and Japanese snowbell. These all, however, require extra water in summer.

Perennials

Drought-tolerant perennials include bergenia, epimedium, hardy geraniums, Solomon's seal, hostas, hellebores, daylilies and Japanese anemones. Do remember, however, that they need generous amounts of water until fully established. Many kinds of wildflowers do well in the acidic soil beneath pines, especially if you add compost, manure or peat moss to the existing soil. Ferns, bleeding heart and heuchera all suit a natural garden with a bit of extra water. If you have a spot with an abundance of moisture, perhaps next to a lawn that is watered regularly, try astilbe, with ferny leaves and plumes or white, pink or red flowers.

Annuals

Forget-me-not, baby blue eyes and feverfew are all hardy annuals that can be sown in early spring for masses of flowers from a packet of seeds. You can fill in later with starts of impatiens, wax begonias.

Groundcovers

For solid cover, choose tough plants such as pachysandra, vinca myrtle, gold flowered St. John's wort, wild strawberry, English ivy, lily of the valley, false Solomon's seal and sweet woodruff.