



Shade delights from Gudrun's garden, l to r, Velvet Groundsel (Roldana petasites); Carex oshimensis 'Gold Strike' (with blooms, insert); Aspidistra 'Stars and Stripes' (2 views) and Alpinia japonica blooms.

GUDRUN LOVES GARDENING IN SHADE!

by GUDRUN OPPERMAN

Shade gardening in Houston is much preferable to gardening in the sun! I have developed quite a shade tolerant collection under mature native trees . . . lots of color, interesting leaf shapes and forms as the canopy has matured. I dare anyone to say my shady garden is boring!

Most shade trees sap moisture from other plants. Mixing tough foliage plants with containers of less hardy shade plants solves some of these problems. Moisture-loving plants can be grown with the gardener's willingness to water.

I love the challenge of trying new plants, but as I get older the criteria are changing to plants being hardier and more drought-tolerant. That list includes:

* **Roldana petasites (velvet groundsel)** -- a beautiful shrubby plant, evergreen, fairly drought tolerant, a late winter to early spring bloomer with fragrant large branched heads of hundreds of bright yellow daisy-like flowers very attractive to pollinators.

* **Dichroa febrifuga** -- Gorgeous blue hydrangea-like flowers. Evergreen.

* **Salvia roemeriana** -- wonderful red-flowering low-growing perennial native salvia that competes quite well with the shade (and roots) of live oaks. Seeds out moderately, but is very sedate.

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* **Helleborus orientalis** -- hellebore or Lenten rose. Does quite well in dappled, dry shade under large crape myrtles. Number of good-performing hybrids available locally. Evergreen, ornamental leaves, winter blooms.



*More shade lovers from Gudrun; 1 to r, variegated leopard plant (Farfugium japonica variegata),
Dichroa febrifuga, Salvia roemeriana and Lenten rose (Helleborus orientalis)*

* **Farfugium japonicum** -- Nothing beats this genus for drama in light to dappled shade. My personal favorites are Kaimon Dake and Argentea. Both have dramatic white variegated leaves. Kaimon Dake has been compared to looking like a snow leopard, while the Argentea is much more dramatic with its irregular large patches of white.

* **Carex oshimensis 'Gold Strike' or 'Everest'** -- a grassy, variegated plant, Gold Strike looks like an unruly wig of blond hair. Great in containers.

* **'Bounce' hybrid Impatiens** series -- stunning showstopper 20" x 20" mounds, constant blooms from early spring to frost, great disease resistance.

Other new shade-lovers: a peach-flowering **Odontonema**; smaller 'Stars and Stripes' and 'Jade Ribbon' **Aspidistra** (don't groan!) and **Alpinia japonica**, a low-growing, evergreen mounding ginger that blooms reliably in early spring with little candy cane-like flowers in deep shade.

Try some of these in your shady patch to add interest to your landscape. And, please, no more limiting yourself to doughnut rings of fibrous begonias around your trees!. Email Gudrun at hoppergo@aol.com

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