Friday’s Feature
By
Theresa Friday
April 11, 2010

Sound the trumpets, bugleweed shines in the shade

In many landscapes, there are areas where lawn grasses will just not grow. Frustrated, gardeners will spend large amounts of time and money attempting to reseed or resod. One of the most common reasons for this failure is not enough sun.

Turfgrasses love sun, the more the better. While some varieties will tolerate less sun, if an area receives less than four hours of sun a day—don’t plant grass.

Ajuga thrives in the shade
For those shady areas, plant something that will tolerate the low light conditions. One such plant is Ajuga, also known as bugleweed. Bugleweed thrives in partial shade to full shade. It does tolerate morning or late afternoon sun, but the leaves will sometimes scorch if they are exposed to full midday sun.

While it does not tolerate heavy foot traffic it will bounce back from an occasional footstep. It is ideal for shady, moist areas under trees where grass will not grow.

The spreading characteristic of bugleweed makes it a natural as a ground cover. However, be sure to plant where its spread and natural creep will be welcomed. If used as an edging near grass, be careful to contain it with solid edging materials. If left uncontrolled, it can quickly invade lawn areas.

Leaf color varies with the cultivar
This low-growing, evergreen member of the mint family provides foliage year round. Leaf color varies from dark green to deep, bronze-like purples. There are more varieties than most people realize. ‘Bronze Beauty’ has waxy metallic bronze leaves. ‘Burgundy Glow’ has tricolored foliage of green, white and dark pink. ‘Catlin’s Giant’ is one of the largest cultivars with purple-green foliage. ‘Black Scallop’ has very deep
purple, almost black, foliage. Developed in Germany, it performs best during our cooler weather, but can become dull and weaker in the Gulf Coast’s hot and humid summers.

**Beautiful flowers rise above the foliage**
In early spring, different varieties produce attractive blue, pink, or even white flowers. The flowers are held above the foliage on four to six inch spikes. The individual flowers are typical of plants in the mint family—tubular with two unequal lips. After the spring bloom, deadhead the flowers for a tidy look and to maximize air circulation. This can be accomplished with a string trimmer, mower or by hand pruning.

Bugleweed may suffer from crown rot, a fungus disease, in hot humid climates, especially if air circulation is limited. It should be divided every two to three years to reduce crowding and the chance of diseases.

Bugleweed can be propagated by seed, cuttings or division. Division can be done just about any time of the year.

So if your repeated attempts to grow grass in the shade have failed, try something else. Bugleweed is not only a tough plant, but is suited for the shade.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

For additional information about all of the county extension services and other articles of interest go to: [http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu](http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu).

###