

## Perennials for Ground Covers

Ground covers are both decorative and problem solvers. Many thrive in shade or where lawns will not grow; others are ideal for preventing soil erosion and weed control.

Perennials for ground covers are not usually the herbaceous types that die down in winter but rather evergreen types, woody sub-shrubs and those with winter persistent foliage.

**Bearberry** (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*) 15 cm tall, spacing 30 to 45 cm. Glossy green leaves and pink, bell-shaped flowers in spring, followed by bright red berries. Sandy dry soil in sun or partial shade.

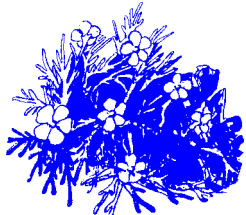
**Goutweed** (*Aegopodium podagraria* ÷ *Variegatum*) 45 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Also called Ground Elder. Bright green and white foliage. Sun or shade.



Goutweed, or  
Bishop's-weed\*



Ajuga, or Bugleweed



Irish Moss

**Bugleflower** (*Ajuga* species) Foliage height 10 to 15 cm, flowers to 30 cm, spacing 30 cm. Bronze or purple-leaved, plain green and variegated forms are also available. Blue flower spikes in May to June, but pink to white are also possible. Sun or shade.

**Woolly Yarrow** (*Achillea tomentosa*) 10 to 15 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Fine-cut silver foliage and light yellow flowers in June to July. Dry soil in full sun. The foliage persists in winter.

**Lady's Mantle** (*Alchemilla mollis* and *vulgaris*) 45 cm tall, spacing 60 cm. Lobed or wavy leaves with a fine down. Chartreuse-yellow flowers in May to June. The dwarf form (*A. erythropoda*) has more silvery leaves. Full sun or partial shade.

**Lily of the Valley** (*Convallaria majallis*) 15 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Broad, pointed green leaves and fragrant pure white flowers in May to June. Good underplanting for shade or partial shade.

**Crown Vetch** (*Coronilla varia*) 60 cm tall, spacing 60 cm. Bushy and upright with masses of pink flowers in June. Use on steep banks as erosion or weed control in sun or partial shade.

**Snow in Summer** (*Cerastium tomentosum*) 15 cm tall, spacing 45 to 60 cm. Silvery foliage covered with white flowers in June. When used in borders, it should be checked by severe cutting back after flowering. Full sun on dry slopes.

**Purple Wintercreeper** (*Euonymus fortunei* ÷ *Coloratus*) 30 cm tall, spacing 60 cm. Dark leaves in summer, turning bright red in fall. Sun or shade.

**Barrenwort** (*Epimedium* varieties) 30 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Also known as ÷ *Bishop's Hat* due to its unique flower shape. Fresh green



Baltic or English Ivy



Pachysandra

leaves with red and bronze tints. Flowers are red, pink, yellow or white. Sandy soil in sun to partial shade.

**Sweet Woodruff** (*Galium odoratum*, *Asperula o.*) 15 to 30 cm, spacing 30 cm. Whorls of bright green, shiny leaves and masses of small, white flowers in June to July. Good underplanting for moist shade with slight acidic soil.

**Baltic or English Ivy** (*Hedera helix*) 15 cm tall, spacing 30 to 40 cm. A fast spreading ground cover. Shiny dark green leaves turning bronze-purple in fall. Shade to partial shade.

**Dead Nettle** ((*Lamium* varieties) 20 cm tall, spacing 30 to 45 cm. Foliage is reddish tones with silver veining. Hooded pink or pure white flowers. Tolerates full sun or shade as an underplanting.

**Japanese Spurge** (*Pachysandra terminalis*) 20 cm tall, spacing 15 to 30 cm. Fully evergreen. Forms a weed-controlling mat. Green-white flowers in April to May. Shade to partial shade.

**Ground Phlox** (*Phlox subulata*) 10 to 15 cm tall, spacing 45 cm. Densely tufted, soft needle-like leaves. Pink, blue or white flower covering in May. Remains green in winter.

**Fleece Flower** (*Polygonum* and *Reynoutria*) 30 cm tall, spacing 30 to 45 cm. Darjeeling Red has non-invasive green foliage with dark pink poker flowers in late summer and fall. Sun or partial shade. Dwarf Lace Plant has green and red foliage on woody stems. Pink flowers and showy seedhead in August to September. Can be invasive.

**Iris and Scotch Moss** (*Sagina subulata verna* and *aurea*) 5 cm tall, spacing 15 to 30 cm. Bright green or gold mossy foliage with tiny white flowers in June to July. Keep weed-free for best effects. Best in shade. Tolerates full sun in moist soil.

**Dragon's Blood Stonecrop** (*Sedum spurium*) 15 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Deep red foliage all season. Starry red flowers in July to August. Used on banks in full sun.

**Thyme** (*Thymus* varieties) 5 to 10 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Woolly Thyme ÷ dense mat of gray foliage and pink-mauve flowers in June. Thyme is evergreen and comes in gold or silver-marked varieties. Sun in well-drained moisture retentive soil.

**Periwinkle** (*Vinca minor*) 25 cm tall, spacing 30 cm. Evergreen with blue-purple flowers in May to June and through the summer. Prefers shade, will tolerate sun if kept moist.

The above selections are good examples of ground cover perennials, but it is not an exclusive list. Many other low-growing plants can function as ground covers. Bold gardeners are massing perennial Geraniums, Geums and Heuchera for this purpose. Both fruiting strawberries and ornamental varieties make excellent ground covers.

Use your creative instincts and be a little daring, and by all means, be different.

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