



What grows where?

Before deciding on what materials to plant, monitor your yard to see exactly how many hours of sun it gets per day.

PHOTO: Nick Novelli for Susan Fredman Design Group

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What other tricks help to brighten dark spots?

Reflective surfaces such as a white fence or trellis are two ideas that will provide good contrast, as are variegated plant materials like hostas with white flowers or ornamental off-white colored grasses.

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Could this be a good place for a small patio or low deck?

Since you don't need anything to grow under those surfaces anyway, this could be the perfect place to establish a little dining or seating area that provides a cool retreat during summer's hottest days.

There are numerous choices; here are some good examples to get you started:

Shrubs Hemlock, yew, holly, rhododendron, azalea

Trees Eastern redbud, Blackhaw viburnum, dogwood

Grasses Fescue, Northern sea oats, some carex, but know that even grasses that will work will never look lush and thick, says Batchelor

Flowers Ligularia, astilbe, bleeding heart, fern, hosta, climbing hydrangea vine, Lady's mantle, smooth hydrangea

Groundcovers Sweet woodruff, Irish or Scottish moss, pachysandra, liriopie, pine needles, mulch, pea stone. To make walking on groundcover more pleasant, consider introducing stepping-stones atop, says Batchelor. "This will cut down on mud and mess," says Chewey

Herbs and Vegetables Most crave sunlight and won't work, though Batchelor has found that mint can work, as can mushrooms