



IS IT SUN OR SHADE

All plants need light to grow and flower, however not all plants require the same amount of light. When trying to decide what to plant in the garden it can be a difficult decision whether a certain plant will thrive in the light conditions provided.

Most catalogues and plant tags list three different lighting requirements for plants. Full sun, part sun (part shade) or full shade.

Full sun refers to direct, unblocked exposure to the sun for at least 6 hours per day. Most plants actually appreciate a bit of shade during mid afternoon heat waves.

Part sun or part shade refers to a site that gets direct sun for a few hours per day and is shaded for the rest of the day. High-branched trees can provide light dappled shade. When planting under large trees the garden may receive part shade at some point during the day in the early spring summer season, however as the tree grows and leafs out the garden may become full shade.

Full shade refers to very little or no direct exposure to the sun. The plants that prefer these conditions are limited and usually they also require a moist soil. Shade under the eaves of a house or under large trees may provide a very dry site, in this situation be sure to water your plants.

If your plants are not getting enough sunlight they will develop weak, straggly stems and thin leaves that are spaced far apart. These plants will flower sparsely or not at all. Plants that should have coloured leaves such as purple or gold may actually become plain green. If your plants have developed these symptoms it is time to relocate them. Occasionally plants may only receive sunlight from one side, in which case they may flower but will grow asymmetrical as they reach towards the sunlight. Plants grown right next to a building will reach outwards.

Wilting plants are usually a sign of too much sun. However it is not usually just a result of excess sun, it is the combination of sun exposure, high heats and dry soil conditions. If you keep these plants well watered they will usually tolerate the sun exposure. If the plants show signs of bleached or faded leaves, small, curled or distorted leaves, or leaves that are brown and crisp around the edges they should be moved to a location with less sun exposure.

When installing new plants or transplanting, these plants are vulnerable to sun exposure until they become established. Keep them well watered initially and eventually they will be able to tolerate the sun.

Sunscauld occurs during the winter months when the bright sun warms the plant and then the plant suddenly cools as the sun disappears. This damage usually occurs on the south or southwest side of



the plant. Sunscald can weaken and kill the plant. If there is not sufficient snow cover to protect the entire plant it is wise to provide extra winter protection such as burlap wrapping (do not use plastic) or plywood teepees.

When planting next to buildings be aware of the heating or cooling effect generated by the building.

Plantings near south-facing walls will have to tolerate much warmer temperatures, and dryer conditions than anywhere else on the property.

A white or light coloured building reflects glaring sun onto nearby plants and soil, while a dark colour absorbs the heat and stays warm longer during the day. These warm conditions can make plants start growing earlier in the spring and continue later in the fall.

Gardens along a north facing wall gets direct sun for only a few hours in the morning and or evening, if at all. Unless there are large trees growing nearby, this location is quite favorable for many plants as the early and late sun, as well as the bright sky of the afternoon provides enough light for sturdy growth and the temperature remains moderate. The winter is easier on plants along the north wall as well because the area generally stays consistently cooler and there isn't the fluctuation in freezing and thawing as experienced along a south wall.

Plantings along east or west walls receive more light than a northern exposure and do not have to tolerate the extreme heat and dryness of a southern exposure. Eastern walls which receive morning sun or generally cooler and moister than westerly walls which receive the hot baking afternoon sun. You can grow almost anything along an east-facing wall. Choose plants with tough leaves that don't easily wilt from heat along a westerly-facing wall.