

As your landscape matures, so do your trees. The canopies fill out and the shade produced becomes heavier. If you are having difficulties with your plants that you haven't experienced before, they could be related to the increased shade in the landscape. Increased shade may also contribute to moist conditions and less air movement, the fundamental factors of disease problems.

Your turfgrass may be suffering from the increasing shade provided by those growing trees. Turfgrass qualifies as a groundcover, but turf does not perform well in dense shade. There are some very attractive substitute groundcovers that are adaptable to problem situations for North Florida landscapes.

Proper selection of an alternative groundcover for a portion of the turf area can minimize irrigation, fertilization and mowing after being established. It usually takes about two years to establish another groundcover. After that, the plantings may only need an occasional trimming to keep them tidy.

Asiatic jasmine is a lovely groundcover plant that is drought tolerant and will grow in the sun or shade. It is also disease and insect tolerant, so pesticides are rarely needed. It spreads rapidly and produces a very thick cover which should be mowed periodically to 5 or 6 inches high. Mowing keeps the jasmine looking neat and reduces the risk of fungus during wet weather.

Two exceptional grasslike perennials that do well in the shade are liriopse and dwarf mondo grass. They both spread by underground rhizomes which help to stabilize an area prone to erosion. A neat appearance is maintained by mowing the faded foliage in late winter before the new growth begins. Both are fairly disease and insect resistant.

Turfgrass is still the best choice, however, for areas of high recreational use. If you decide that turf is your best option but shade has become a problem, take a look at your large shrubs and landscape trees. By trimming up lower tree branches, light intensity can be increased. Selectively removing or pruning overgrown border shrubs can also lighten an area. Learn more at <http://solutionsforyourlife.com>

Find out how to recycle that yard waste on Saturday, August 21st at a presentation by the UF Master Gardeners. The composting class will be held at 2 pm at the Columbia County Library in downtown Lake City. You can also reach the Master Gardeners by calling the UF/IFAS Extension Office at 752-5384.

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