



Gardening In Clay Soil

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Gardening in clay soil

Gardening in clay soils can be difficult because clay is usually heavy, sticky and difficult to work. Clay soils are frequently high in nutrients but if they have lost their structure and become compacted due to activities such as construction or over tilling, they become challenging. Poor soil structure results in less oxygen available to plants and their synergistic microorganisms, fewer areas for roots to occupy, and an inability to drain away excess water.

To improve soil structure, add a thin layer of compost under 2-3" of wood mulch to garden beds. When these materials decompose, they feed soil microorganisms and add organic material to the soil. Also, natural processes such as freeze-thaw cycles and the action of earthworms and other invertebrates work to loosen soil and improve structure. Good soil structure takes years to develop, but by avoiding overworking the soil (tilling) and adding organic matter you are facilitating the process.

***Plants with an asterisk can tolerate moist soil.**

TREES	PLANT INFO
Bald Cypress*	Deer resistant, full sun
Crab Apples	Full sun
Elms	Full sun
Honeylocust	Deer resistant, full sun
Pear	Full sun
Red Maple*	Full sun
River Birch*	Deer resistant, full sun
Spruce	Well drained clay only, Deer resistant, full sun
Swamp Oak*	Full sun
Sweetgum*	Full sun
Willow*	Deer resistant, full sun

Full Sun - plants need at least 8 hours of direct sunlight

Plants Tolerant of Clay Soils

Before selecting plants for clay soil check the drainage. Dig a hole about the size of the plant (a minimum of 10" wide and deep) and fill it to the top with water. Come back and check on it every 30 minutes or so. The faster it disappears, the better your drainage is. If there is still water in the hole after four hours, you have poorly drained soil and will need to select species that can tolerate wetter conditions.

SHRUBS	PLANT INFO
Arborvitae	Native, evergreen, part sun - full sun
Aronia*	Native, fall color, part sun - full sun
Bush Clover	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Buttonbush	Native, part sun - full sun
Coralberry	Native, deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Cotoneaster	Deer resistant, Part sun - full sun
Deutzia	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Diervilla	Native, good fall color, deer resistant, full sun - shade
Dogwood Shrub*	Native, deer resistant, winter interest, part sun - full sun
Elderberry	Deer resistant, part sun-full sun
Forsythia	Deer resistant, part sun-full sun
Juniper	Well drained clay only, native, deer resistant, full sun
Lilac	Well drained clay only, full sun
Ninebark	Native, full sun
Potentilla	Native, deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Quince	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Rose of Sharon	Deer resistant, full sun
Smooth Hydrangea	Well drained clay only, native, part sun - full sun
Spirea	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Summersweet*	Native, deer resistant, shade - full sun
Sweetspire*	Native, deer resistant, shade - full sun
Sumac	Native, part sun - full sun
Winterberry Holly*	Native, deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Viburnum dentatum*	Native, deer resistant, part sun-full sun
Viburnum Nudum*	Native, fall color, Full sun - part shade
Weigela	Deer resistant, full sun

Part Sun – plants need between 4 hours and 8 hours of direct sunlight.

May require some afternoon shade.

PERENNIALS	PLANT INFO
Aster	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Beardtongue*	Part sun - full sun
Bee Balm*	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Blue Star	Native, deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Black-eyed Susan	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Butterfly Weed	Well drained clay only, full sun
Coneflower	Well drained clay only, deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Coreopsis	Well drained soil only, deer resistant, full sun
Daylilies*	Part sun - full sun
False Sunflower	Deer resistant, full sun
False Indigo*	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Geranium, perennial	Deer resistant, part sun - full sun
Goatsbeard*	Deer resistant, part shade
Goldenrod	Full sun
Grasses, perennial	Deer resistant, full sun
Hibiscus*	Full sun
Hosta*	Part shade - full shade
Liastris*	Deer resistant, full sun
Pachysandra	Deer resistant, shade - part sun
Phlox	Well drained clay only, part sun - full sun
Plumbago	Deer resistant, shade - part sun
Salvia	Well drained clay only, deer resistant, part sun – full sun
Sedum	Well drained clay, full sun
Siberian Iris*	Part sun – full sun
Turtlehead*	Part sun – full sun
Russian Sage	Well drained clay only, deer resistant, full sun
Yarrow	Well drained clay, full sun

Shade - plants need less than 4 hours of direct sunlight. Avoid hot afternoon sun.