

GROUNDCOVERS

HUMBER NURSERIES 'GREEN THUMB GUIDE'



Groundcovers are known for being both decorative and garden problem solvers. Some thrive in the shade of trees or where lawns won't grow, while others are ideal for preventing soil erosion on banks. All have good foliage, some are evergreen and many have attractive flowers. Many plants used elsewhere in the garden as components of the shrub or perennial border, as single specimens or as foundation plantings, become groundcovers when mass planted. An important part of any garden, groundcovers link a house with its surroundings and ensure the success of the design by unifying the other elements; (trees, shrubs, walkways, patios and lawns). When chosen carefully and used creatively, these practical plants can add considerable interest to your home setting.

PREPARING THE SOIL

Since many plants are grown in close proximity, each competing for water and nutrients, it is important to improve the quality of soil prior to planting. The addition of organic matter will improve the drainage of clay soil and hold moisture and nutrients in the root zone. One-third of the final mix should be organic matter, such as compost, manure or peat moss. Spreading 2 inches over the soil and digging in to a depth of 6 inches will give you the results you are looking for. In addition to organic material, an all-purpose fertilizer should be spread over the planting area before digging in other amendments.

CHOOSING

Never be afraid to choose a plant because you like its looks, but remember that it must be suitable for the place you want to plant it. There are hundreds of possibilities, a variety of sizes, colours and textures. Some of the best known groundcovers are Crown Vetch, Japanese Spurge, Ajuga, Periwinkle, Goutweed and English Ivy. These are by no means your only choices; there are hundreds of hardy perennials, vines, low growing shrubs and evergreens that are excellent for this purpose. If you are going to be more adventuresome in your choice, be sure it is appropriate to the site.

SPACING

No hard and fast rules apply, but recommended spacing is provided with the plant descriptions. When planting near your home, you may want a fuller look by fitting more plants closely together. Elsewhere in the garden you can allow plants time to spread and fill in. Most gardeners opt for a staggered pattern when planting, so as the plants grow they snuggle nicely against each other without leaving spaces. When used on banks for erosion control, this staggered arrangement has the advantage of not allowing water to run off in a straight line.

ROSES

An entire group of roses are classified as Groundcover Roses, and they are beautiful low-growing, spreading types in many colour choices. All have excellent disease-resistant foliage.

THE PROBLEM OF WEEDS

In preparing the planting area, all weeds should be removed either physically or by using a vegetative killer such as Green Earth Grass & Weed Killer. Until your groundcover plants have filled in, be conscientious in eradicating weed seedlings.

MULCHING

A good mulch will be highly beneficial to a new groundcover planting. A few inches of mulch will control weeds and make it easier to pull them out when they do appear. Organic mulches such as Bark Nuggets or Shredded Bark improve the soil and add nutrients as they decompose. They also conserve moisture and tend to evenly control the soil temperature both in summer and winter.

MAINTENANCE

Groundcovers do not require the high maintenance that a lawn does, but it is a mistake to believe that they need no care whatsoever. Mowing with lawnmower blades at their highest setting or using a nylon line trimmer can rejuvenate plantings. The best time for trimming is early spring before new growth starts. A planting of evergreen Japanese spurge will be greatly improved by this shearing. The method and timing of cleaning up groundcovers will depend on the variety.

GROUND COVERS (100 PLANTS PER FLAT)

Spaced 4" apart will cover.....	11 sq. ft.
Spaced 6" apart will cover.....	25 sq. ft.
Spaced 8" apart will cover.....	44 sq. ft.
Spaced 10" apart will cover.....	70 sq. ft.
Spaced 12" apart will cover.....	100 sq. ft.
Spaced 15" apart will cover.....	156 sq. ft.
Spaced 18" apart will cover.....	225 sq. ft.
Spaced 24" apart will cover.....	400 sq. ft.

Space is calculated centre to centre

PLANT SPACING NUMBER OF PLANTS REQUIRED FOR A GIVEN SPACE

Spacing	10 ft ²	15 ft ²	25 ft ²	50 ft ²	100 ft ²
6" x 6"	40	60	100	200	400
8" x 8"	23	34	57	113	225

- ☉ Tolerates part shade
- ☪ Tolerates full shade
- ☀ Requires full sun
- 🍁 Indicates Native Plant

SUGGESTED GROUND COVER LIST

GOUTWEED ☉☪ <i>Aegopodium podagraria 'Variegatum'</i> (45 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Creeper, silver variegated leaves, excellent for brightening a shady location. Sometimes called Ground Elder and Bishop's Weed.	LAMIUM (DEAD NETTLE) ☉☪ <i>Lamium maculatum 'White Nancy'</i> Very hardy. (15 cm) Spacing 30-45 cm. Pure white flowers from May to July with a repeat in fall. A vigorous groundcover with silvery foliage. Stunning in shade or partial shade.
BUGLE FLOWER ☉☪ <i>Ajuga Reptans</i> (15 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Excellent plant for rock gardens or ground cover, flowers blue in May-June, sun or shade.	YELLOW ARCHANGEL ☉☪ <i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> (20 - 35 cm) Plant 45 cm apart. Yellow flowers and leaves marked with silver, spreads quickly.
BEARBERRY ☉☪ <i>Arctostaphylos 'Uva-ursi'</i> (15 cm) Plant 30-45 cm apart. One of Canada's native plants especially Pacific Northwest. Bright, glossy green leaves, pink flowers in spring and bright red berries in fall and winter. Thrives on neglect and poor soil.	MAZUS REPTANS 'ALBA' ☉☪ (15 cm) Plant 30 cm apart Pure white flowers in summer, moist soils
WORMWOOD ☉ <i>Artemisia 'Stelleriana'</i> (30-60 cm) Plant 60 cm apart. Also known as Old Woman and Beach Wormwood. With silvery-white woolly foliage	JAPANESE SPURGE ☉☪ <i>Pachysandra terminalis</i> Ideal evergreen groundcover for that bare ground under trees. Makes a solid permanent mat in which no weeds have a chance to grow.
BUNCHBERRY ☉☪ <i>Cornus canadensis</i> (15 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Native. Snowy white bracts in late spring followed by red berries, green foliage becoming purple in fall.	CREeping POTENTILLA ☉☪ <i>Potentilla reptans peniflora</i> (15 cm) Plant 60 cm apart. Double yellow bloom. Fast growing.
LILY OF THE VALLEY ☉☪ <i>Convallaria majalis</i> (15-30 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Excellent plant for massing in sun or shade. Fragrant white flowers, ideal for cutting May-June.	CANBY'S PACHISTIMA ☉☪ <i>Paxistima canbyi</i> (30 cm) Dark green foliage all year. Good for rock garden, ground cover or low hedge. Native.
CROWN VETCH ☉☪ <i>Coronilla varia 'Penngift'</i> Ideal for erosion control on steep banks and for choking out weeds on other areas in sun or shade. Foliage is finely dissected and bright green. Flowers pink from June until frost. Plant 60 cm apart.	IRISH MOSS AND SCOTCH MOSS (GOLDEN) ☉☪ <i>Sagina subulata</i> (5 cm) Plant 15 – 30 cm apart. Bright green mossy foliage and tiny white flowers.
BEARBERRY COTONEASTER ☉☪ <i>Cotoneaster 'Dammeri'</i> (10 cm) spreading semi-evergreen shrub with pink/white flowers in spring and bright red berries in winter	DRAGON'S BLOOD STONECROP ☉ <i>Sedum spurium</i> (10 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Crimson red flowers, stems red, excellent colour.
PURPLE WINTER CREEPER ☉☪ <i>Euonymus fortunei 'Coloratus'</i> (30 cm) Plant 60 cm apart. Green leaves, red in fall, excellent ground cover for mass plantings. Also climbs if near a wall..	SEDUM – IN VARIETY ☉ (10-15 cm) 'Acre' – Golden Carpet – Yellow flowers June/July, dry soil 'Kamschaticum Variegata' – Variegated foliage, yellow flowers touched with red in July/August
WINTERGREEN ☉☪ <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> (10 cm) Plant 45 cm apart. Native ground cover with edible aromatic foliage and small red fruit. Needs acid soil.	PURPLE CARPET THYME ☉☪ <i>Thymus praecos 'Purple Carpet'</i> (10 cm) Spacing 30 cm. Masses of salmon-pink flowers from June to August. Mat-forming evergreen. Good as groundcover or between stepping stones. Very hardy.
SWEET WOODRUFF ☉ <i>Galium odoratum (Asperula o.)</i> (30 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Shiny green leaves small, white flowers.	WOOLLY THYME ☉☪ <i>Thymus pseudo-lanuginosus</i> (5 cm) Plant 30 cm apart. Grey-woolly foliage all winter, rock garden plant.
ENGLISH IVY ☉☪ <i>Hedera helix</i> Plant 30 cm apart. Hardy evergreen vine or groundcover, excellent in shade.	PERIWINKLE ☉☪ <i>Vinca minor</i> (25 cm) Plant 30 cm apart Also called Myrtle, blue flowers June to September, most popular ground cover for use in shaded areas.

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