



# Redding Garden Club

## Garden Tips

### Plan a Woodland Garden

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By Sally Pfeifer

Does this sound familiar? You purchase strong, healthy plants, yet they never survive in your garden. Don't give up gardening—the problem may be that they are sun loving plants, and your garden doesn't get full sun. If your garden is shaded, you may want to consider planning a **woodland garden**.

Woodland plants have a unique enchantment and beauty all their own. Our local area, in particular, has many public woodland gardens and education supporting them. In Stamford, **The Bartlett Arboretum** has acres of woodland plants. They also offer classes. Information is available at [www.bartlettarboretum.org](http://www.bartlettarboretum.org) and class schedules by phone at (203) 322-6971. The **Garden Education Center of Greenwich** has speakers, workshops, trips and summer tours of private gardens. Information can be found at [www.gecgreenwich.org](http://www.gecgreenwich.org) and by phone at (203) 869-9242. **The New York Botanical Garden** is an incredible resource and has local classes through the **New Canaan Nature Center**. Information for the NYBG can be found at [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org) or (800)322-6924. Look up the New Canaan Nature Center at [www.newcanaannature.org/nybg](http://www.newcanaannature.org/nybg) or (203) 966-9577.

When starting a new area, make sure that you put in enough plants to be showy. You may want to have someone come in to landscape an area or just consult. Many local nurseries offer that service. Nurseries start to stock up in March and April and can be a great place to find inspiration. Many Redding Garden Club friends have woodland gardens; they are usually very happy to share some plants.

Woodland gardens need moist humus soil that is somewhat acidic. Connecticut soil is usually acidic to begin with, so you don't have to do much adjusting. If you want to test your soil, the **Agricultural Extension Center** on route 6 in Bethel has a form with instructions on how to do the sample and where to send it. They are more than happy to help; (203) 207-8440.

Azaleas, mountain laurel, rhododendrons, trailing arbutus and the pink lady's slipper prefer a definitely acid soil. For such plants a pH ranging between 4.5 and 5.5 is desirable. There are a number of chemicals which may be applied to the soil to increase the acidity.

Aluminum sulphate and sulfur increase acidity; they are commonly used for hydrangeas. These take time to work into the soil. So test your soil and see if you need to amend it, otherwise these plants will not thrive.

Mulch used for acid-loving woodland plants can be oak leaves (red & white), peat moss, pine needles, sawdust, cypress branches, maple leaves. Rotting bark and wood from logs or stumps of hemlock and oak are good, too.

Horticulture can be a continuing learning adventure. When you think you know a lot about gardening and you start to look into it, you realize you know very little....If you want some referrals or suggestions, contact me at [sallypfeifer@yahoo.com](mailto:sallypfeifer@yahoo.com).

### Woodland Plants

Here are some attractive woodland plants that you may know.

#### These will grow in neutral soil:

Anemone canadensis  
(Canada anemone)  
Convallaria majalis  
(Lily-of-the Valley)

Cypripedium pubescens  
(*Yellow Lady's Slipper*)  
Myosotis laxas  
(*Forget-me-not*)  
Podophyllum peltatum (*Mayapple*)  
Polygonatum biflorum  
(*Small Solomon's Seal*)  
Sanguinaria canadensis  
(*Blood root*)  
Trillium erectum  
(*Wake-robin*)  
Viola conspersa  
(*Dog Violet*)

These need a very nearly  
neutral soil:

Aquilegia canadensis  
(*Canada Columbine*)  
Arisaema triphyllum  
(*Jack-in the-Pulpit*)  
Campanula rotundifolia (*Bluebell*)  
Cypripedium hirsutum  
(*Showy Lady's Slipper*)  
Dicentra Cucullaria  
(*Dutchman's Breeches*)  
Trillium grandiflorum  
(*Large Flowering Trillium*)  
For moderately acid soil:  
Anemone quinquefolia  
(*Wood Anemone*)  
Galax aphylla  
(*Galax or wandflower*)  
Houstonia caerulea  
(aka Hedyotis)  
(*Bluets or Quaker Ladies*)  
Mitchella repens  
(*Partridge berry*)

For very acid soil:

Epigaea repens  
(*Trailing Arbutus*)  
Iris verna  
(*Dwarf Iris*)

This is just a sampling of woodland flowering plants. There are whole families of ferns that can be added.