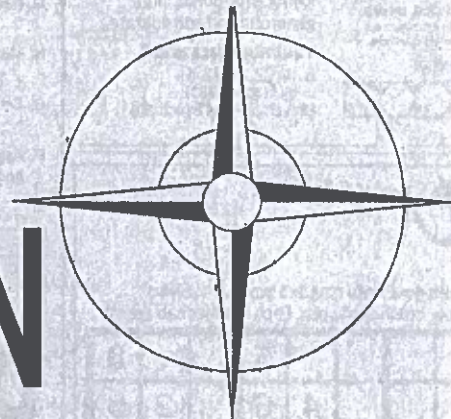


# GARDENING BY DIRECTION



Each side of your home has its own characteristics

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Foundation plantings help frame a home and anchor it to its site. They make a natural transition from the building to the land.

But houses have at least four walls, each facing a different direction. As a gardener, knowing the characteristics of the various locations in your landscape is vital.

The biggest consideration is usually the amount of light that reaches the plants. Too much or too little moisture, hot summer and cold, drying winter winds also create problems, as do different conditions in the same area, like a south corner's eastern exposure getting stronger sun than the western side.

Foundation planting beds are narrow, and the plants in them must look their best at all times, so choose those with a long season of interest.

Keep size in mind. It takes a lot of effort to keep a 10-foot-tall shrub pruned back so it doesn't block the windows. On the other hand, plants that are too small will get lost, especially in front of a tall house.

To draw attention to the front door, set the tallest plants at the outer corners of the house. These should be about two-thirds the height to the roof. Then frame the main entry door with shorter plants. An imaginary line should form a rough "V" from the door plantings to the outer corners, with no plants in between taller than the line.

Here are a few suggestions for the best plants for a given area, no matter which way it faces.

## North shade

No matter how tall, the house casts a triangular shadow in the north-facing lot, deepest in the center. Morning light creeps from the east, strong afternoon sun from the west. Plants that thrive on one side may not be happy on the other. Rain may not reach the north side, or the area might stay mushy and wet for a long time. Cold winter winds will be strong here.

Choose plants for the center that tolerate moist or dry soil, depending on the overall condition. Place a tough evergreen on the northwest corner to block winter winds and a tree



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Sunlight, moisture and wind are key considerations for foundation planting beds. They are narrow, and the plants must look their best at all times, so choose those with a long season of interest.

or shrubs to cast dappled light from the east.

♦ Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*). 12 by 6 feet; soft foliage; narrow form allows some late sun, blocks winter wind. Zones 2-7.

♦ Rhododendron (*Rhododendron* spp.). Pink flowers in spring; evergreen shrub; 3 by 3 feet; may rebloom in fall. Zones 4-8.

♦ Hosta (*Hosta* spp.). Low-growing perennial with lavender flowers in late summer; 6 to 24 inches, depending on variety. Zones 3-9.

## South scorch

Without trees in the yard, the blazing sun, reflecting from the southern walls, can be brutal. In the winter, it can fool plants into thinking it's spring, resulting in damage or death. Rain evaporates fast; supplemental water needed in summer. Choose heat- and drought-tolerant plants and mulch the beds to conserve moisture. Choose varieties that bloom later in the season to avoid buds drying up.

♦ Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*). Large shrub filters

morning sun, shades nearby plants; 8 by 8 feet. Zones 4-9.

♦ Lilac (*Syringa pubescens patula* "Miss Kim"). Lavender-pink blooms in late spring; dwarf shrub easily pruned into formal shapes; 4 by 4 feet. Zones 5-8.

♦ Juniper (*Juniperus procumbens* "Nana"). Evergreen shrub; low, spreading ground cover, very heat-tolerant; 10 by 24 inches. Zones 3-9.

## Gentle east

Cool light, consistent moisture and light winds, but full-sun plants won't be happy after the morning sun moves out of the area. Use part-shade plants that tolerate moist conditions. A small tree on the south corner will provide consistent shade.

♦ Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* "Bloodgood"). Small tree holds red color in low light; one of the hardiest cultivars; 12 by 10 feet. Zones 5-8.

♦ Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla* "Monred"). Flowering shrub blooms red in summer; flower color holds in summer heat; 4 by 3 feet. Zones 5-9.

♦ Hakonechloa (*Hakonechloa macra* "Aureola"). Perennial grass; golden foliage likes cool, moist soil; 18 by 24 inches. Zones 5-9.

## Blasting west

Only tough, full-sun plants should be used in this deceptive exposure, even though in shade all morning. Hot sun and west winds suck the moisture out of everything. A tree or shrub on the south end will block some hot sun; dense, hardy shrub on the north corner will block strong winter winds.

♦ Viburnum (*Viburnum sargentii* "Onindaga"). Tough shrub blooms white in summer; ornamental red fruit; 10 by 10 feet. Zones 4-7.

♦ Fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides* "Hameln"). Airy perennial grass is tough and durable; 2 by 3 feet. Zones 5-9.

♦ Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* atropurpurea). Small shrub with deep burgundy leaves tolerates almost any condition; 2 by 3 feet. Zones 5-8.