



Favorite Native Plants for a Shady Boulevard Garden

Selecting plants for a boulevard garden (often called a “hellstrip garden”) can be challenging.

The tough conditions between the road and sidewalk can be a stressful environment for an urban garden. Road salt, soil compaction, snow mounds, pollution, human and pet traffic, and more, make it necessary to plant resilient native vegetation that can fend for itself.

- First, learn your municipality’s rules about planting in a boulevard.
- Then make sure there is no underground infrastructure or sensitive tree roots to restrict a planting.
- Next, investigate soil conditions and prep the soil—which can entail removing or smothering grass and reducing soil compaction.
- Now you are ready to plant.

* Ensure that the plants you choose will work with your boulevard’s soil type.

*Here are a few of our favorites for shady conditions**

Forbs

- Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
- Hairy Woodmint (*Blephilia hirsuta*)
- Large-leaved Aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*)
- Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
- Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*)
- False Solomon’s Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)
- Two-leaf Miterwort (*Mitella diphylla*)
- Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*)
- Bluebells (*Mertensia spp.*)
- Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*)
- Wild Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)
- Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)
- Jacob’s Ladder (*Polemonium reptans*)
- Zigzag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)
- Heart-leaved Aster (*Symphotrichum cordifolium*)
- Early Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*)
- Downy Yellow Violet (*Viola pubescens*)

Ferns

- Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*)
- Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)

Groundcover plants

- Canada Anemone (*Anemone canadensis*)
- Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
- Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)
- Common Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*)

Grasses and sedges

- Short-beak Sedge (*Carex brevior*)
- Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*)
- Rosy Sedge (*Carex rosea*)
- Sprengel’s Sedge (*Carex sprengelii*)
- Northern Sea Oats (*Uniola latifolia*)

Low-growing shrubs

- Dwarf Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*)
- Smooth Wild Rose (*Rosa blanda*)



Photo by Julia Vanatta