

# Ground Cover

**'Ground covers' are low growing plants that cover the ground. Often the branches touching the soil will send out roots at the leaf notches, followed by new top growth, making the 'cover' more dense. Used in landscaping to create a carpet look; or on a bank, to prevent soil erosion & create a pleasing view. Once established they totally cover the soil surface, prevent weeds, as well as retain soil moisture.**

## COVER UP

Planting Most have a spreading habit, & need to be planted a good distance apart. Generally, they need at least 0.5m<sup>2</sup> around themselves. Vigorous plants (such as Cotoneaster & Aegopodium) spread quickly and can be planted 1m<sup>2</sup> apart. Stagger ground covers as you plant them, make certain the planting does not take on a "grid" appearance. When planting, cultivate the soil & remove large rocks. If the soil is poor, plant a ground cover which can tolerate poor soil (such as Houttuynia or Thyme) or work in pre-moistened peatmoss (if it's spring, you can work in mushroom manure as well). Work a small amount of **GARDENWORKS**™ Bone Meal into the bottom of each planting hole. Care & Feeding Keep area well watered & weed-free until established. Feed annually with all-purpose fertilizer or **GARDENWORKS**™ Tree, Shrub & Hedge food in the case of evergreens. A well-chosen ground cover should be virtually maintenance free once established.

## RELIABLE VARIETIES FOR THE SHADE

Aegopodium podagraria, Goutweed: Herbaceous plant with white edged leaves. Spreads quickly; can be invasive. Part-shade to full sun in moist conditions.

Ajuga reptans, Bugleweed: Low growing, fast spreading, herbaceous perennial. Blue 'candle' flowers. Several varieties available in green, bronze, variegated or tri-coloured foliage. Easy care.

Cornus canadensis, Bunchberry: Fast spreading, deciduous perennial. Spring flowers are white bracts that surround the tiny true flowers. Red fall berries. Red-orange foliage in fall. Likes moist rich acid soil in shade or part-shade.

Gaultheria procumbens, Wintergreen : Evergreen, with dark green glossy leaves. White bell-shaped summer flowers, & large, bright, red, edible fall berries. Needs lime-free, moist soil.

Gaultheria shallon, Salal: Evergreen with green leaves & white or pink bell-shaped flowers. Edible black fall berries. Sun or shade.

Pachysandra terminalis, Japanese Spurge: Evergreen & fast-growing. Light green branches; very uniform in height. Spring flowers are creamy white 'candles', but are fairly insignificant. Attractive foliage, in green or variegated form.

Vaccinium vitis-idaea, Lingonberry: Slow growing. Spreads by underground runners. Dark glossy, mature leaves & reddish new growth. White or pink flowers followed by sour, edible, red berries. Likes moist, acidic soil.

## RELIABLE VARIETIES FOR THE SUN

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi, Kinikinick : Evergreen, small glossy leaves turn bronze in winter. Tiny, pendulous, pale-pink spring flowers. Red berries in fall. Very effective on slopes & walls.

Calluna spP., Heather: Evergreen in many varieties to choose from. Prefers moist, peaty, sandy, well-drained soil. Most need acid soil, & do not need to be fed often. Shear after blooming to encourage low shrubby growth.

Cotoneaster spP.: Many varieties available; evergreen & deciduous. Green, glossy leaves & small white spring flowers. Bright red berries in fall & winter. Very effective on slopes & does well in poor but moist soil.

Fragaria x Pink Panda: A cross between potentilla & strawberry. Strawberry-like leaves, pink flowers & edible fruit. Great in baskets & slope plantings.

Houttuynia, Chameleon Plant: Fast spreading herbaceous perennial. Red, white & green leaves & small white flowers. In full sun, leaf variegation is very distinct while in partshade, the leaf reverts to green. Slow to emerge during spring.

Hypericum spP., St. John's Wort : Evergreen with light coloured leaves & large open golden early summer flowers. Golden, edible berries in late summer. Grows fast, very low maintenance.

Juniperus spp., Juniper : Evergreen shrub with long arching branches. Read the tag for eventual height.

Thyme : Evergreen ground hugging perennial covered in pink/purple summer flowers. Walking on thyme releases it's fresh scent. Prefers dry, exposed garden sites.

Raoulia australis: Mat growth forms are ideal for water conservation: a low surface area prevents wind dessication; water requirements for nutrient transportation are low due to compact growth; and, in this case, water is "stored" in the peaty decaying layer of older leaves below the fresh growth instead of draining away into the rock or sand. Best plant this in well drained soils and full sun. Height to 15cm spreads to 2m.