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Ground Covers in Landscape

Groundcovers are low growing plants that cover the soil in place of turf. Essentially they are ground hugging species whose growth helps to suppress weeds. When used functionally ground covers fill in bare spots in the landscape, help prevent erosion of soil on steep banks and fill in shady areas under trees where other plants have difficulty in growing.

Types of Groundcovers

There are three principal types of ground covers-

1. Broadleaf Evergreen-These ground covers retain their leaves year-round, e.g. money plant, Zebra plant.
2. Deciduous ground covers-They lose their leaves in the fall and winter season.
3. Coniferous ground covers-They have needle like or scalelike leaves. These plants retain their color throughout the year and thereby make excellent ground covers. e.g. Juniperus. Most of the ground covers are perennial.

Uses of Ground Cover in Landscape

1. Ground cover is primarily used to create a ground plane or carpet which links and defines spaces without impeding views,
2. and as a base or platform on which to display accent planting,
3. It may also be used to prevent access
4. In some cases groundcovers can be effectively used for masking the meeting point between a building or wall and ground.
5. Ground covers play an important role in landscaping because they can be used in many areas where the soil is not suitable for growing grass. These areas may be too steep, rocky, shaded, shallow soiled, or eroded for the proper growth of grass.

6. Ground covers are also used simply for the beauty they contribute to the landscape.
7. Lowgrowing, dense ground covers that grow relatively slowly make attractive foreground planting for shrubbery borders.
8. They are also placed between plantings of broadleaf evergreens where they serve to keep the soil cool and shade the roots of certain plants.

Selection

Before selecting ground covers for use in the landscape, the following questions must be answered:

- In what type of soil does the plant grow best?
The ground covers, as other plants, differ somewhat according to the soil type, moisture conditions, and amount of light they require.
- How long will it take for the plants to cover the area in which they are planted?
To produce a mature effect quickly, it may be necessary to introduce temporary measures e.g. planting at greater densities for thinning out later. The success of this method depends on ensuring that subsequent thinning is carried out. It is expensive unless thinning can be used elsewhere.
- How expensive are the plants?
In case of expensive plants, cheaper plants can be positioned between the permanent planting, to be cleared at a later stage. Cheap plants used are usually vigorous though coarse and difficult to remove.
- Is the ground cover to serve a specific role in landscape?