**Groundcovers Plant List 5**
**HORT 308/609 Spring 2018**

Assigned Readings for Plant List 5

Read the pages in your textbook associated with the introduction to Vines & Groundcovers (p. 559), the family descriptions, and individual taxa covered on Plant List 5 that was distributed in lab. These plant lists are also available on the course website.

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/syllabi/308/home/frameset.htm

Groundcovers as Design Elements

- Aesthetic impacts
  - Unifying features
  - Softening elements
  - Highlighting through textural contrasts
  - Facers around buildings / shrubs

Groundcovers as Design Elements

- Utilitarian uses
  - Green roofs
  - Fire breaks → succulents / fleshy plants / non-volatile
  - Hide irrigation / lighting / security fixtures / utilities / shallow roots
  - Wildlife food / habitat
**Groundcovers as Design Elements**

- **Aesthetic impacts**
  - Careful mixing types → can add interest and biodiversity → or look weedy?

  ![Images](Ugh.png)  ![Images](Ahh.png)  ![Images](Argh.png)

- **Maintenance**
  - Debris & organic waste
  - Minimal mowing / pruning
  - Tolerate greater shade than turfgrasses
  - Protect surface roots of trees
  - Combining with geophytes
  - Climbing vine concerns
  - Hidden unwanted insects / pests

**Ecological Benefits of Groundcovers**

- **Physical**
  - Reduced erosion / slope stabilization
  - Improved water infiltration
  - Reduce snow drifting / dust blowing
  - Glare reduction

- **Biological**
  - Oxygen generation compared to bare soil or surface cover
  - Transpiration / temperature moderation
  - Biofiltration
  - Some are low water users

**Groundcovers: Selection**

- Many vines also serve as groundcovers
  - Evergreen versus deciduous
  - Woody versus herbaceous
- Temporary versus permanent
  - Annual versus nurse plants
- Speed of establishment
- Weed suppression
- Rapidity of canopy closure
- Ability to tolerate foot traffic
- Decreasing spacing is exponential in number of plants & cost required
**Ajuga reptans**  
**Bugleweed**

- Evergreen herbaceous groundcover, z. 4 - 8(9)
- Stoloniferous rosettes, 2” to 6” tall
- Dark green, variegated, purple, pink, red, white

**Pachysandra terminalis**  
**Japanese Pachysandra**

- Popular rhizomatous low groundcover, popular in USDA hardiness zones 5 (4) - 8 (9a)
- Uniform dark glossy medium coarse evergreen foliage, also some variegated cultivars
- Needs shade in south, ok sun or shade in cooler north; insignificant greenish white flowers
- Needs steady moisture supply and good fertility
- No foot traffic (Uncle Jim’s frustration); chlorosis on high pH soils, tends to establish slowly; not drought tolerant
- Good companion groundcover to small shrubs as it does not overwhelm them

**Ardisia japonica**  
**Japanese Ardisia**

- Medium-coarse textured slowly spreading rhizomatous semi-woody evergreen groundcover
- Dark glossy green leaves; bright green new growth
- Contrasting red fruit from late fall to winter
- Good substitute for *Pachysandra* in z. 9 (8b) - 13
- Morning sun to moderate shade, some irrigation needed, mulch until canopy closes
- Cold damage, algal leaf spot, crown gall, root knot nematodes, and hemispheric scale are occasional problems
**Ligularia spp.** *(Farfugium spp.)*

- Evergreen or dieback herbaceous perennial 1' - 2' mounds with flowers 3' - 4'
- Useful in USDA z. 5(4) - 9(10)
  - Bold coarse textured leaves
  - Dark glossy green or splotched
- Corymbose, paniculate, or spike-like 3' to 6' tall inflorescences of yellow composite flowers

**Asparagus densiflorus** ‘Sprengeri’

- Spreading/sprawling mound of arching stiffly vine-like branches, 2’ to 3’ tall
- Fine textured bright to dark green leaves
- Sparse tiny white flowers, then red berries

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**Ligularia spp.** *(Farfugium spp.)*

- Adapted to shade in south, sun to shade in north
- Taxa vary in environmental tolerances, but all need a steady water supply
- Alternative to *Hosta* as a shade groundcover
- Deserves wider trialing in our region

**Asparagus densiflorus** ‘Sprengeri’

- Foliage may yellow / brown in response to excess sun, cold, or nutrient deficiencies
- Root hardy z. 9 (8b) - 13; foliage damaged by hard frosts / light freezes
- Small scale shade to filtered sun groundcover, hanging baskets, patio containers, weeping over a wall, interiorscapes
- Bit spiny on older plants
**Vinca major**  
Big Periwinkle

- Essentially a larger version of *V. minor*
- Coarser textured, but more vigorous than *V. minor*; can become aggressive; avoid hot dry locations, particularly with variegated cultivars
- Variegated taxa increasingly popular in the trade
- Cold tolerant only to z. 7, but heat tolerant to z. 10

**Vinca minor**  
Periwinkle

- Attractive evergreen mat-forming groundcover
- Use mostly in shady locations in TX; can be invasive
- *V. major* or *T. asiaticum* alternative for colder climate
- 1" diameter blue flowers in spring, sporadically thereafter; adapted to USDA z.5 (4b) – 8a (8b)

**Aspidistra elatior**  
Cast Iron Plant

- Rhizomatous evergreen groundcover, USDA zones 8 (7b) - 13; bold statement
- Coarse textured large leaves; tropical effect; contrast to fine textured plants
- Fades / burn in sun, very shade tolerant

**Aspidistra elatior**  
Cast Iron Plant

- Well drained organic soil, pH adaptable, moderate heat and drought tolerance; very durable, inconsequential flowers
- Groundcover, containers, raised beds in shaded sites; good under trees; a favorite for low light interiorscapes
- Slow to cover ground, limited cold hardiness, insect problems in interiors, periodic clean-up pruning required
**Cyrtomium falcatum**

**Holly Fern**

- Well adapted fern for general use in Texas, USDA z. 8b (8a)-13
- Fronds reminiscent of holly leaves, dark lustrous green, sharply serrated margins appear spiny, but are not
- Reproduces via sporangia on the backs of the fronds
- Needs shade as do most ferns in Texas, best in a moist well drained acidic soil, but can tolerate higher pH soils & more salinity than most ferns

**Nephrolepis exaltata**

**Boston Fern**

- Spreading clumps of overall sword-shaped bipinnately lobed fronds
- Legendary interiorscape plant, but a bit messy (drops fronds)
- Semi-evergreen (USDA z. 9 - 8b) to evergreen (USDA z. 10 - 13) groundcover; niches in walls or palm trunks; pots & hanging baskets
- Most rapid growth in partial shade and fertile moist soils
- Low relative humidity or drought induces marginal necrosis

**Thelypteris kunthii**

**Wood Fern**

- Dieback to semi-evergreen herbaceous perennial fern, 2’ to 3’ tall, indefinite spread
- Shield-shaped fronds; TX native
- Shady moist environments, USDA z. 8 - 13, better adapted to our region than most ferns
- Effective shade groundcover, naturalizing plant; tough fern

**Tradescantia pallida**

**Setcreasea**

- Succulent evergreen purple or green medium-coarse textured groundcover, USDA z. 9(8b)-13
- Small 3-petal pink-purple flowers
- Best color in full sun, root rots in wet soils, some irregularity in canopy density
- Containers, hanging baskets, groundcover, over low walls
**Liriope muscari**

**Liriope**
- Dense clumping groundcover once established
- Versatile USDA z. 6 - 13 plant; handles full sun conditions better than *Ophiopogon japonicus,*
- Often thicker coarser foliage than *O. japonicus*

**Ophiopogon japonicus**

**Monkeygrass**
- Tufted mat-forming groundcover, more turfgrass-like texture than *Liriope muscari*
- Often softer texture & lower growing, 2” to 8” (12”) tall, than *L. muscari*
- Very useful due to fine texture & shade tolerance, avoid afternoon sun, useful in USDA zones 7 (6b) - 13

**Liriope muscari**

**Liriope**
- Flower above or below foliage, neutral to positive feature, purple-blue spikes
- Variegated forms may tolerate less sun

**Ophiopogon japonicus**

**Monkeygrass**
- Useful due to fine texture & shade tolerance, avoid afternoon sun, useful in USDA zones 7 (6b) - 13
**Trachelospermum asiaticum**  
Asian Jasmine  
- Woody evergreen groundcover/vine in USDA z. 8-13, can be used as herbaceous groundcover z. 7  
- Premier groundcover for southern half of Texas  
- Tolerates full sun to dense shade, soil adaptable, moderately drought & salt tolerant; seldom climbs

**Winter damage**

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**Trachelospermum asiaticum**  
Asian Jasmine  
- Good weed suppression once established  
- Probably over-used, but hard to beat in adverse sites; variegated cultivars less vigorous  
- Flowers not as effective, use *Trachelospermum jasminoides* (Confederate Jasmine) for fragrant white flowers or as a climbing vine in z. 9 (8)-13

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**Euonymus fortunei**  
Wintercreeper Euonymus  
- Extremely variable growth form = vine, groundcover, or small shrub  
- Useful in USDA hardiness z. 6 (5) - 8 (9a), but needs afternoon shade in Texas for best performance  
- Naturalized, invasive?, in some regions; climbs but slow to start

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**Euonymous fortunei**  
Wintercreeper Euonymus  
- Often used as groundcover for purple effect in winter or for variegated foliage  
- Best reserved for use in Central to North Texas  
- Scale insects, crown gall, anthracnose, aphids

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'Coloratus' in winter

Up a tree
**Lonicera japonica**  
Japanese Honeysuckle  
- Rampant naturalized vine or groundcover, USDA z. 4 - 9  
- Evergreen to semi-evergreen  
- White & yellow spring flowers  
- Can be major weed problem  
- Overwhelms smaller plants

**Aptenia cordifolia**  
Hearts-And-Flowers  
- Rich glossy succulent foliage with small red composite-like flowers  
- Sun to mostly sunny sites, well drained soils; pH adaptable; some salinity and drought tolerance  
- Limited cold tolerance, useful USDA hardiness zones 9 (8b) – 13  
- Groundcover, roadside plantings, hanging baskets, spiller in patio containers or over low walls

**Sphagnetica trilobata**  
Wedelia  
- Evergreen herbaceous perennial vining groundcover, USDA z. 9-13, 6”-12” (24”) tall  
- Sparsely distributed yellow daisy-like flowers, contrast with dark glossy green leaves  
- Rapid grower, sun to part shade, heat & very salt tolerant  
- Genus = Complaya, Sphagnetica, Silphium, Thelechitonia, Wedelia?

**Fragaria × ananassa**  
Strawberry  
- Rosette forming stoloniferous herbaceous perennial that spreads to form a mat-like groundcover 6” to 8” (10”) tall  
- Pubescent dark green leaves, ⅜” to 1¼” white to pink flowers, & edible strawberries  
- June-bearing versus everbearing  
- Hardy in z. 5 to 8a, best treated as a cool season annual in 8b - 11  
- Avoid heavy clay, high pH soils, or saline soils / irrigation water  
- Virus, nematodes, animals and pillbugs can be problems
**Fragaria × ananassa**  
**Strawberry**

Numerous production practices from low to high tech

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**Rubus spp.**  
**Blackberries, Raspberries, Dewberries, & Brambles**

- More often encountered as edible crops
- Sometimes effective for dual edible / ornamental purposes
  - Primocanes versus floricanes
- Usually better in northern portions of our region
- Tendency to trap trash
- Bank covers, naturalizing, woodland edges, wildscaping, educational gardens, home orchards

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**Rubus trivialis**  
**Southern Dewberry**

- Semi-evergreen semi-woody vine-like suckering bramble groundcover
  - Handsome dark green lustrous trifoliate leaves and white flowers in spring
  - Tattered ragged appearance by late summer through winter, spider mites and rust fungus on summer leaves
  - Hardy in USDA zones 6 – 9 (10)
- Valued for edible dewberries of variable quality
- Forms dense impenetrable low stands of prickly canes
- Too vigorous for mixed plantings
Ipomoea batatas
Ornamental Sweet Potato
- Low (6") sprawling annual or perennial vine
- Valued for foliage effects, bright green, purple-black, or variegated
  - ‘Blackie’, ‘Margarita’, ‘Tricolor’, and ‘Black Beauty’ are excellent cultivars
  - Source of commercial sweet potatoes, but not palatable with ornamental clones
- Flowers not important, heat tolerant
- Foliage feeding insects; sweet potato weevil

Ipomoea imperati
Beach Morning Glory
- Stoloniferous vine, important dune stabilizer
- White flowers, thick glossy leaves
- Extremely salt, heat, & wind tolerant, z. 9 – 13
- Can be a vigorous grower to a fault

Additional images may be viewed on Plant Picture Pages on http://landscapeplants.tamu.edu

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