

# Plants for Problem Places: Clay Soil

Clay soil can be a challenge for gardeners, but it doesn't have to be! There are plenty of plants that can thrive in this challenging environment. In this article, we'll introduce you to some of the best plants for clay soil, including trees, shrubs, flowers, and groundcovers.



## Plants for Problem Places: Clay Soil by Rhonda Mawhood Lee

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## Trees

Trees are a great way to add height and structure to your landscape. Here are a few trees that do well in clay soil:

- **River birch (*Betula nigra*):** This tree is known for its beautiful peeling bark. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.
- **Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*):** This tree has glossy leaves that turn a brilliant red in the fall. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Red maple (*Acer rubrum*):** This tree is known for its vibrant red fall foliage. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.

- **White oak (*Quercus alba*):** This tree is a majestic shade tree that can live for hundreds of years. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Pin oak (*Quercus palustris*):** This tree is known for its deeply lobed leaves. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.

## Shrubs

Shrubs can add color, texture, and interest to your landscape. Here are a few shrubs that do well in clay soil:

- **Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*):** This shrub has showy white flowers that bloom in the summer. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.
- **Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*):** This shrub has bright red berries that persist into the winter. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.
- **Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*):** This shrub has beautiful pink flowers that bloom in the spring. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Viburnum (*Viburnum* spp.):** This genus of shrubs includes many different species, all of which are tolerant of clay soil. Viburnums have beautiful flowers and berries, and they make great hedges.
- **Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*):** This shrub has clusters of bright purple berries that persist into the winter. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.

## Flowers

Flowers can add a splash of color to your landscape. Here are a few flowers that do well in clay soil:

- **Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*):** This flower is a magnet for butterflies and other pollinators. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*):** This flower has cheerful yellow petals with a dark center. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*):** This flower has daisy-like blooms in a variety of colors. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*):** This flower has clusters of tiny flowers in a variety of colors. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Daylily (*Hemerocallis* spp.):** This flower has trumpet-shaped flowers in a variety of colors. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.

## Groundcovers

Groundcovers can help to suppress weeds and add a touch of greenery to your landscape. Here are a few groundcovers that do well in clay soil:

- **Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*):** This groundcover has trailing stems with bright yellow flowers. It is also tolerant of wet soil and can help to improve drainage.
- **Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*):** This groundcover has creeping stems with blue flowers. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*):** This groundcover has trailing stems with leathery leaves and red berries. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.
- **Pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*):** This groundcover has dark green leaves and white flowers. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.

- **Liriope (*Liriope muscari*):** This groundcover has strap-like leaves and blue flowers. It is also tolerant of drought and heat.

## Tips for Gardening with Clay Soil

Here are a few tips for gardening with clay soil:

- **Add organic matter:** Organic matter, such as compost or manure, can help to improve the structure of clay soil and make it easier for plants to grow.
- **Mulch:** Mulch can help to retain moisture in clay soil and suppress weeds.
- **Water deeply and infrequently:** Clay soil can hold a lot of water, so it is important to water deeply and infrequently. This will help to encourage roots to grow deep into the soil.
- **Avoid overworking the soil:** Clay soil can be easily compacted, so it is important to avoid overworking it. This means tilling or digging only when necessary.

With a little care and attention, you can create a beautiful and thriving garden in clay soil. So don't let clay soil discourage you from gardening! Embrace the challenge and enjoy the rewards.



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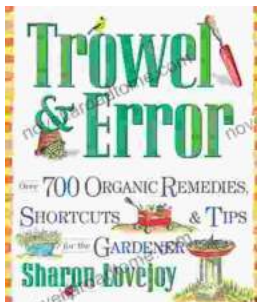
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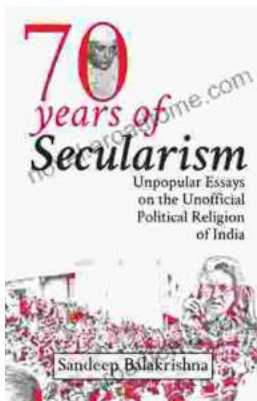
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