

TOPIC : “UNDERSTOREY PLANTSCAPING”.

GUEST SPEAKER : STEVE FLOOD

MALENY GARDEN CLUB MEETING : 29 NOVEMBER 2019 AT THE OLD WITTA SCHOOL

Factors to consider –

- Canopy; shade; amount of light; level of root invasion and therefore competition e.g. palm trees
- Condition of soil e.g. most critical pH level; compaction; moisture; structure etc
- Camellias and azaleas love shady, acidic conditions
- Test soil by lifting a shovelful to waist height and tip over to examine how it breaks up. Lumps and bits indicate poor soil – needs organic matter. Some adjustments may be necessary
- Adjust pH with lime or dolomite and add quality soil. Avoid building up close to tree trunks
- Improve moisture retention with peatmoss and water crystals
- Install irrigation system and add slow release fertiliser
- Inoculate soil with microbe tea which has 16 different fungi and bacteria in it
- Product ‘Garden Delight’ is microbial with all purpose rock minerals – slow release; maintains soil pH; up to 50% less water needed; reduces plant stress. Available from Earthlife Garden Care, Rockville Qld Free call 1800 819 003

Plants for Bright Light –

- Some bromeliads – Neoregelia, Vriesea, and Cryptanthus varieties
- Peach trees poison soil so nothing grows beneath them (allelopathy) creates too much acid in soil
- Plant Broms that have tanks in thick layer of mulch. Earth Stars like organic mulch mixed with bark
- Dracaenas and cordylines. Gingers - blue ginger and beehive ginger survive very dry times
- Shrubs – clerodendrum, Strobilanthes ‘Persian Shield’ needs a lot of water
- Justicia – white likes shade and pink likes some sun
- Medinilla – chandelier only in shade and orange in light morning sun

Medium to Low Light –

- Understorey palms e.g. chamaedorea; window pane palm has holes in leaves and collects moisture from mulch layer
- Cycads e.g. Bowenia – native to Queensland - 2m wide and will grow in dark understorey
- Aroids e.g. anthurium; philodendron climber; alocasia green velvet (elephant ear plant) hardly ever gets attacked; alocasia cuprea – stunning green veined leaves; aglaonema
- Dieffenbachia has large leaves, is easy to grow, is poisonous, loves shade and not much water – will shrivel in hot sun
- Anthurium magnificum has square stems; anthurium macdougallii; anthurium specially bred for container growth to stay small
- Vanilla orchid will grow up a palm trunk or bark fence – need to hand pollinate
- Some ferns – maidenhairs usually need moisture
- Begonias – Rex ; rhizomatous easier to grow than Rex
- Bromeliad guzmania and nidularium are shade lovers. Nidulariums don’t like much water
- Calatheas like shade and manage with minimal water
- Gesneriads e.g. gloxinia chrysothemis; gloxinia tropical from Brazil – large purple flowers with spearmint aroma

Best to combine plants with similar growth needs e.g. water lovers. Modify and enhance soils

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