

Gardening Basics

Groundcovers for Shade

As trees mature, they can create so much shade that the grass underneath them thins and may eventually die. Grass needs at least 6 hours of direct sunlight to grow well, but several Texas native groundcovers thrive in shady areas and require limited special care once established. The common names for three options for you to consider are horseherb, white avens, and golden groundsel.

Horseherb (*Calyptracarpus vialis*)

Horseherb is sometimes called straggler daisy. According to the Native Plant Society of Texas, "horseherb is native to south and south-central Texas and adapts to most other parts of the state. It can grow up to 8 to 10 inches tall, with opposite leaves that are usually less than 1 inch long. It has a sprawling to prostrate habit. Horseherb is perennial and although deciduous, it may remain green during a mild North Texas winter." It does need supplemental water the first year. Not everyone loves this plant as it can spread somewhat aggressively. More information on the care and habits of horseherb:

<https://www.npsot.org/posts/native-plant/calyptracarpus-vialis/>



"horse herb" by Aka Hige is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0



"White Avens (*Geum canadense*)" by pverdonk is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

White Avens (*Geum canadense*)

White Avens is a member of the large rose family of plants and has leaves that vaguely resemble another member - strawberries. It produces small white flowers in the spring, growing 4 to 18 inches tall but can grow even taller under ideal conditions. To care for and maintain white avens, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center points out that, "As plants are short-lived, allow to self-sow to maintain a continuous groundcover. In dry areas, water during summer to ensure leaf retention. To keep the clingy seeds low to the ground, mow once a week during flowering and once a month thereafter, no lower than 4 inches." See the full description at:

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=GECA7

Golden Groundsel (*Packera obovata*)

Golden Groundsel is an attractive member of the aster family with yellow flowers that grow on 2-to-18-inch stalks in late winter through early spring and attract bees and butterflies. The base of the plant is a rosette of oval, dark green leaves that remains evergreen most of the year in North Texas. This plant prefers organically rich soil but is fairly tolerant of our North Texas native soil. Although drought-tolerant, it needs some supplemental water until it is established. The Texas Native Plant Society offers these observations and advice: "With their runners or stolons, the Golden Groundsel can fill up a corner of the garden. Plus, their runners can be easily transplanted to start new colonies. As a bonus, they can also propagate by seed. After the flowers have been seeded, removing the spent stem cleans them up, and they are a wonderful evergreen ground cover for the rest of the year. Other than cutting back stems after flowering, very little maintenance is required. In addition, it has no serious insect or disease problems." Read more here:

<https://www.npsot.org/posts/golden-groundsel-our-bright-eyed-early-riser/>



"Millrace backyard (5)" by charmcity123 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

Caution: Before planting native groundcovers, check with your HOA if you have one. Healthy native plants spread—sometimes aggressively—and therefore may not be approved for your area.

Finding these Texas native groundcovers may be challenging. Your best bet is to search out nurseries that specialize in native plants and follow local Native Plant Society of Texas chapter websites for news about their plant sales, as well as their other recommendations for native plants for North Texas gardens:

- Denton County: <https://www.npsot.org/chapters/trinity-forks/>
- Collin County: <https://www.npsot.org/chapters/collin-county/>
- Dallas County: <https://www.npsot.org/chapters/dallas/>

Their pages for other native plant recommendations:

- Denton County: <https://www.npsot.org/chapters/trinity-forks/trinity-forks-resources/>
- Collin County: <https://npsot.org/chapters/collin-county/programs>
- Dallas County: <https://npsot.org/chapters/dallas/plant-info>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts
Cooperating