

Weekly Column for this week of 2-15-10
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Planting Ground Covers

Spring planning continues this week with an emphasis on ground covers. Ground covers can serve many purposes in the landscape. They can be used to cover large areas and can be used in areas that are difficult for other plantings. Ground covers can also provide erosion control on dry slopes and provide cover where mowing grass is not a desirable option. Ground covers can add texture and form and help to complete the look of your landscape.

Ground covers that are planted in the spring are most successful. However, they can be planted in the fall if planted early and watered properly to encourage rapid growth. Plantings in late fall will usually suffer from frost damage. Remember to consider the size of plants when thinking about using a ground cover. For example, flowers could be spaced closer together but shrubs would need to be spaced farther apart.

A 2 inch layer of mulch such as peat moss or wood chips will help to control about 90% of weeds in ground covers. As for watering, an inch of water once a week will usually be sufficient. A yearly fertilizing with a complete fertilizer such as 12-12-12 at 1.5 to 2 pounds per 100 square feet in the spring or late fall would also be beneficial.

Ground covers may be the addition you are looking for in your landscape. For more information, including a list of ground covers and their descriptions you can visit the web to find the source I used for this column at <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-105.pdf>. Here you will also find more helpful tips and guidelines. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office for more information.

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