



Determining the Condition of my Site

Soil, light, water and drainage will determine how the plants will thrive on your planting site.



What are the Soil Characteristics?

In order to determine the condition of your site, compress some moist soil by clenching it in your hand. If the soil holds together in your hand and forms a "cast", then test the strength of the cast by tossing it from hand to hand.

Sand - Unable to form a cast

Sandy Loam - Very weak cast, breaks when handled

Loam - Good cast, allows some handling

Clay Loam - Strong cast, easily handled without breaking

Light Conditions

Plants have different light requirements; to assess light conditions count the number of hours of direct sunlight your planting site receives through the day.

Full Sun - Eight hours a day or more.

Partial Shade - Three to six hours a day.

Full Shade - No direct sun.

Water and Drainage

Drainage describes how quickly water drains out of a particular area. Soil type, slope and depth to water table are factors that affect soil drainage. To determine the drainage characteristics of your planting site, dig a hole 30 cm (12 in) wide and deep. Fill the hole with water and allow it to drain. Fill again and measure the amount of time it takes to empty the hole of water. Soils with good drainage will take less than 2 hrs. Poorly drained soils will take 2 hrs or longer.

Well drained - Water drains rapidly from the site, and seldom pools even after a heavy rain or snow melt.

Moderately drained - Water may pool but only briefly.

Imperfectly drained - Water sometimes pools on the site for extended periods.

Poorly drained - Water drains slowly from the site all year long and the soils may appear wet just below the surface.