

Growing Rainforest Plants

- Many groundcovers that naturally grow near water courses will also do well in the shade of trees even if conditions are dry.
- It is important to mulch these plants around their root zones with leaf litter or well decayed compost.
- Young plants need to be watered regularly for the first couple of months, particularly if weather is hot and dry.
- Once established, rainforest plants can survive long dry spells. Though in very hot, dry, or windy periods an occasional good soaking will help keep them healthy.
- Unlike other native plants most rainforest plants respond positively to fertilizer provided it is well watered in.
- Bandicoots and echidnas can dig up young plants. If replanted quickly they will usually survive.
- Do not use lime or dolomite unless the pH of your soil is less than 5, as these plants like to grow in acid soil.
- Because of the hot, mostly dry spring weather in the Northern Rivers area best results will be obtained by planting once the wet season has arrived.
- Never dig or walk upon wet soil as compaction can destroy its good structure.
- All types of soil will benefit from the addition of composted organic matter. With clay soil gypsum will also improve its structure.

References for Rainforest Groundcovers

Growing Native Plants on the North Coast of NSW, by Coffs Harbour Group, Australian Plant Society, NSW, Ltd., 2006

Descriptions of plants and information about propagation for some individual species as well as general information about plant management and propagation techniques

Plants of the Forest Floor, compiled by Penny Watford and illustrated by Margaret Elliott, 2006
Very useful pen and ink illustrations and comes with a CD of photographs

Australian Rainforest Plants I-VI, by Nan and Hugh Nicholson

Beautiful photographs and descriptions of rainforest plants and includes information about their use in the home garden. Includes plants from all of tropical and subtropical Australia

Grasses of Subtropical Eastern Australia, illustrations and photographs by Margaret Elliott, 2008
A small book with pen and ink illustrations and a CD with photographs

Mangroves to Mountains, revised edition, by Glenn Liepen, Jan Glazebrook, Denise Cox and Kerry Rathie, 2008

Beautiful photographs. Most plants also occur in northern NSW.

Produced by

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Rainforest Groundcover Plants in the Home Garden



In this category we have listed plants which spread and cover the ground. Some can be lawn substitutes in damp or shady areas where typical lawn grasses won't survive or thrive. However, these groundcovers usually do not cope with hard wear. Other plants listed are low-growing, but do not necessarily spread into a mat. They will however, make an attractive addition to a garden, usually in a shady area.



Choose your plants carefully, situate in appropriate sites and, with moderate amount of care, you can have your own little bit of rainforest

A Selection of Rainforest Groundcovers Suitable for the Home Garden

Centella asiatica 'Gotu Kola'

A creeping perennial, rooting along the stems, with rounded leaves with tiny toothed edges. It has tiny white flowers, hidden under the leaves. It is used by herbalists to treat arthritis and other inflammatory problems. Can substitute for lawn in damp places but may dry off if it gets too dry. Propagate by rooted plantlets on runners.

Dichondra repens 'Kidney Weed'

A mat-forming plant with dull green rounded leaves and tiny yellow or white flowers, this can be a good substitute for lawn in moist conditions. It does not handle a lot of wear, but spreads by runners producing new plants.

Geranium solanderi 'Native Geranium'

This is a sprawling plant with deeply lobed leaves and small pink flowers in pairs. Can be a problem scrambling over other plants. It grows well in sunnier spots but can take shade. Spreads readily by seed.

Goodenia rotundifolia (for shade) and *Goodenia ovata* (for sun) will grow in stony or sandy soil. Both these trailing plants have bright yellow flowers and glossy green leaves. Propagate by cuttings.



Centella asiatica
Gotu Kola

Oplismenus aemulus 'Basket Grass'

While known to Bush regenerators as 'Basket Grass' this plant is also known as 'Creeping Beard Grass'. It is a soft, densely spreading grass which thrives in semi-shaded and slightly damp areas. It can be successfully mowed and is propagated by runners.

Panicum pygmaeum 'Dwarf Panic'

Another rainforest grass, which grows in sheltered, semi-shaded areas, with weak stems growing 20-30 cm tall. Probably propagated by runners.

Pratia purpurescens 'White Root'

This low-growing, trailing plant has long white roots, hence its common name. It has quite pretty small white flowers and grows well in shady, moist areas. It spreads by rooting along the stems, and can invade other parts of the garden, but is a useful and very pretty groundcover in suitable areas.

Tetragonia tetragonoides 'Warrigal Greens', 'New Zealand Spinach'

This is a succulent, prostrate and scrambling herb with upright branches to 30cm. It has fleshy, bright green leaves and tiny yellow flowers close to the stem. The leaves are edible, but must be cooked. Grows well in full sun, but needs moisture. Grows from seed.

Tripladenia cunninghamii 'Kreysigia', 'Tripladenia'

An attractive sprawling plant up to 40cm high, with shiny green leaves, zig-zag stems and pretty pale pink flowers. It does not seem to be an aggressive spreader, does well in light shade,



Pratia purpurescens White Root

needs to be well mulched, and is propagated by runners.

Viola betonicifolia 'Arrow-leaved Violet'

A small plant to 20cm high, with long tapering leaves and dark purple flowers. It forms discreet plants but spreads readily when the explosive seed capsules open. Likes some shelter, but can grow in full sun.

Viola banksii 'Native Violet'

A quick-growing plant with round to kidney shaped leaves and pretty white and purple flowers. It prefers some shade and moisture and flowers all year round. As with strawberries, it is easily propagated by transplanting rooted plantlets. (This may still be known as *Viola hederacea* in some nurseries.)