

FACT SHEET: Groundcovers

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Groundcovers, a Florida-Friendly turfgrass alternative, add color and texture to your landscape in areas where turf won't grow or you don't want it. In time, groundcovers require fewer inputs than turfgrass such as fertilizer, pesticides, water and overall maintenance. There are several Florida-Friendly turfgrasses. As with all plant additions and before making the purchase, consider your site conditions: sun, shade, soil pH and type, wet, dry and mature plant size.

Two of my favorites are Perennial peanut and Bronze Beauty jasmine. Perennial peanut does very well in full sun, while Bronze Beauty jasmine performs better in more shade. We have both groundcovers at the Extension office if you'd like to see them in a landscape setting.

Perennial peanut has a lovely rounded leaf, dies back above ground in the winter, but the rhizomes remain alive underground. The plants return in the spring and produce golden edible flowers. Bronze Beauty jasmine produces small white flowers and is a beauty because of the three foliage colors: dark green, light green and a reddish-bronze.

Both Perennial peanut and Bronze Beauty jasmine will fully cover an area within 2-3 years depending on the spacing. Both groundcovers, spaced 24 inches on center, from the center of one to the center of the next plant, would require 100 plants to cover 400 square feet. Placed 36 inches on center, 100 plants would cover 900 square feet. The difference is the amount of money you want to spend on the plants, how many holes you want to dig, amount of mulch you want to purchase/spread and how soon you want the area to be fully covered. Mulch is important because it retains moisture in the soil so you can water less once the plants are established.

For more information, go to: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/EP/EP01600.pdf> and http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic/landscape_perennial_peanut

For horticultural assistance, contact the Hillsborough County Extension Office, 744-5519, or visit us at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584. Master Gardeners are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. We can help!