

LUNGWORTS

With silver splashes or spots on their leaves, these hardy perennials are the flashy footlights of shade gardens.

New hybrids offer bolder foliage and more bountiful spring flowers, which often start pink and shift to blue. Plants range in size from 8 to 15 inches tall.

1

'PINK TWILIGHT'
Leaves shimmer all the way up the flower stalks.

2

'DARK VADER'
Speckled plants prized for their ability to tolerate full sun in cool climates.

3

'HIGH CONTRAST'
These can handle hot and humid conditions.

4

'SAMOURAI'
Nearly white foliage looks especially luminous.

5

'RASPBERRY SPLASH'
Berry-color flowers top the long, spotted leaves.

6

'MAJESTÉ'
Creamy spots on the leaves mature to silver.

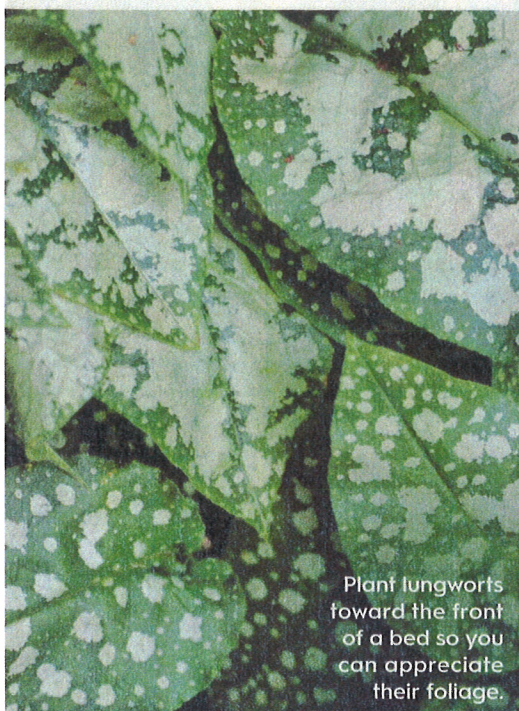
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'SHRIMPS ON THE BARBIE'
These dense plants are named for their bright pink flowers.

8

'MOONSHINE'
Spots gradually spread across dark leaves.





Plant lungworts toward the front of a bed so you can appreciate their foliage.



The mounding plants typically spread about 2 feet.

Lungworts are part of the genus *Pulmonaria* and cousins of forget-me-nots and brunneras. The name of these perennials refers to the leaves, which were said to resemble unhealthy lungs. (The plants were thought to remedy respiratory diseases.) Modern

lungwort hybrids tend to be healthier, more vigorous, and more reliable than older varieties.

■ GROWING CONDITIONS

Plant lungworts in well-drained soil enriched with compost. Morning sun is ideal, but they'll also do well in light shade throughout the day. Regular watering (but not soggy conditions) encourages lush foliage. Varieties with more silver in the leaves often tolerate sun and heat better

than darker leaf plants. In the cooler temperatures of the Pacific Northwest, some varieties grow well in full sun. Most lungworts are hardy in Zones 4–9.

■ PESTS AND PROBLEMS

Deer and rabbits typically don't care for lungworts' slightly hairy leaves. Powdery mildew can be a problem in dense shade. If leaves are diseased, cut them off at ground level; new foliage will grow back.

■ CARE

Cut off tattered leaves in early spring and, if necessary,

during the summer. After flowers fade, removing the stems may encourage occasional repeat blooms later in the season. Mulch lightly with compost or autumn leaves in fall to enrich the soil.

■ PROPAGATION

Dividing mature plants encourages growth. Divide from spring through early fall by digging up a clump and teasing it apart. You can also cut sections apart with a sharp knife. Water well after replanting.

■ SOURCES

Check *bluestoneperennials.com* and *whiteflowerfarm.com*.

SILVER POLISH

Lungworts bloom for four weeks or so in the cool temperatures of early spring—often as early as February in mild climates—but their foliage draws attention long after flowers fade. Some natural companions:

BULBS

Plant primulas and early-spring bulbs, such as miniature daffodils and grape hyacinth. After the bulbs bloom, lungworts' leaves will hide the fading foliage.

WOODLAND PLANTS

Lungworts are also striking around the skirts of hellebores and astilbes, with shade-tolerant ornamental grasses, and with Japanese and maidenhair ferns. ■

[POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY]

LUNGWORTS' FLOWER CLUSTERS LOOK LIKE TINY BOUQUETS ABOVE THE MOUNDS OF LEAVES AND ARE AN EARLY NECTAR SOURCE FOR BEES.

