

Sunchokes (*Helianthus tuberosus*) don't play nice with other plants. They smother them in the shade of tall stems, and thick leaves. This makes them pros at wiping out grass and weeds to make way for new plantings.

Blue mist flower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) and Tartarian aster (*Aster tataricus*) both wait until late in the season to start growing. This allows more plants to grow in the same space earlier in the season, while later in the season, these two smother weeds year after year.

Oregano (*Origanum* spp) make a slow-spreading clump of fragrant cover. Its flowers are attractive to beneficial insects, and the oils that make up its fragrance have potent antibacterial properties.

Mache (*Valerianella locusta*) is a salad plant. It's also an annual that seeds itself in late spring, and pops up as a thick carpet of green in cold weather. The white flowers it puts up on wiry stems over bright green leaves make a beautiful, and functional cover.

Violets (*Viola* spp) make a low carpet of green. If a gap in the cover appears, they lean in, and fill it as though it was never there.

Comfrey (*Symphytum* spp) are fortresses of mulch. They stay put as a clump, and can be cut several times a year to be spread as mulch far beyond just the spread of their leaves.

Mint (*Mentha* spp) run aggressively. Although they can do well in established beds under management, they excel at getting a foothold beyond bed borders and making quick cover once mulch is applied.

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis fulva*) act as a trellis for vining plants. So paired, they make excellent cover better than either could used alone.

Creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea*) is a low growing spreader with pretty blue flowers in spring, and reddish purple leaves through the winter in most climates. Well managed, it could be the basis for a garden, or an entire lawn.

Strawberries (*Fragaria* spp) vary from the clumping Alpine strawberries, to the running wild Virginia strawberries. While blocking weed invasion in beds, and spreading to conquer new planting area, they provide a bonus harvest of luscious, sweet fruit.

Mastering the Growing Edge Top 10 **Dynamic Mulch** of Food Forests

by Mortal Tree Design

luke@simonorganics.com

There are many uses for plants in the garden: plants on the right stay in one place as a clump, or are low growing, so get along with shorter plants. Moving to the left, the plants are taller, and more aggressive at expanding the patch of ground they cover. Used together, they can be powerful tools for creating gardens that are easy to care for.

