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Versatile vines add color, character to landscape

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Vines are among the most versatile plants in the landscape. They can screen unsightly views, provide privacy on patios, lend character to solid walls, break up the monotony of long fences, accent or soften architectural details or cover the ground where either you don't want turf grass or it won't grow.

Landscape architects sometime use vines on trees to provide a new dimension to the tree canopy. An oak tree bearing the bright orange flowers of cross vine, for instance, is sure to be a conversation piece.

Some vines, like Bougainvillea or Allamanda, are excellent for use in patio pots or hanging baskets. Moonvine adds a wonderful fragrance with an evening bloom.

Honeysuckle and trumpet creeper are prized for their flowers, while other vines, such as five-leaf Akebia, climbing fig and ivy, are grown for their foliage. Wisteria is sometimes trained as a single-standing specimen or small tree.

When selecting vines, consider a number of factors, including their intended use, landscape location (sun or shade, for instance), soil adaptability, support structure needed and color of bloom or foliage.

Think about the maintenance requirement, too. Will it need constant pruning to keep it within bounds?

Certain fast-growing vines, such as wisteria and common honeysuckle, can cover trees and shrubs unless you do a lot of routine pruning. Some can injure or kill small trees by wrapping around them and cutting off nutrient flow. Others, like autumn-flowering clematis, will disperse their seeds after flowering and pop up where they're not wanted.

Annual vines are grown from seed each year. Among them are moonvine (*Ipomoea alba*), black-eyed Susan vine (*Thunbergia alata*), sweet pea (*Lathyrus odorata*), purple hyacinth bean (*Doliches lablab*) and morning glory (*Ipomoea spp.*).

Perennial vines persist from year to year. The foliage may die back in winter and resprout in spring. Among the favorites are trumpet creeper (*Campsis spp.*), Carolina yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), wisteria (*Wisteria spp.*) and clematis (*Clematis hybrida*).

Consider the amount of training a vine requires, too. Some cling and climb naturally, while others must be trained to follow the supporting wire, pole or other structure.

Most vines, except those grown as ground covers or in pots, require some type of support to grow. Climbing vines come in **three types: clinging, twining and winding**.

Clinging vines grasp a rough surface with rootlets or adhesive disks. Climbing fig (*Ficus pumila*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), Virginia creeper (*Pathenocissus quinquefolia*) and trumpet creeper (Campsis radicans) are examples.

These vines can cover solid surfaces such as walls and fences. However, they may loosen mortar between bricks over time and are hard to remove once they become anchored.

They can damage wood, too, by clinging too closely, preventing good air circulation and promoting wood decay. So, clinging vines are best suited for trellises or arbors away from solid surfaces.

Twining vines climb by encircling upright supports such as poles, wires and lattices. They require mechanical training to follow a support. Examples are Mandevilla (*Mandevilla splendens*), wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) and morning glory.

Winding vines climb with tendrils: slim, flexible, leafless stems that wrap around anything they contact. One of the best-known examples is the muscadine grape. Ornamental examples include maypop (*Passiflora spp.*), trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), clematis (*Clematis hybrida*) and cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*).

Twining and winding vines are supported best on wires, lattice, trellises and arbors. Make supports from sturdy, durable materials.

Always use treated lumber for outdoor structures. Redwood, cedar and cypress are particularly durable. A wood preservative/water seal will prolong the life of the structure. Wrought iron makes an excellent support, too. Aluminum or copper wire won't rust.

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