

VINES



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Vines have many uses. They produce flowers and fall color for eye appeal. They can shade the south or west wall of a house, soften the look of a fence, visually break up large, unadorned walls, enhance the good features of a house, or conceal less attractive areas. Vines are especially good for small spaces because they are so vertical. For example, a vine growing on a fence will take up only 12" of width, whereas many hedges would need 4'-6'. Some vines can even be used as ground cover on a hillside.

The lushness and health of a vine depends largely on how content the roots are. Dig a large hole and improve the soil as needed with peat moss or other organic matter. Don't fertilize at planting time. In subsequent years, you can fertilize with 10-10-10 fertilizer early in the spring.

Unless used as a groundcover, vines need an additional support structure in most cases. This support should be sturdy enough to bear the weight of a full-grown specimen. Trellises should be 4"-6" away from a solid wall for good air circulation.

Vines climb in different ways. Some climb via tendrils which coil around a fence or trellis (i.e., Sweet Pea). Others climb via root-like "suction cups" which adhere to brick or other rough surfaces (i.e., Boston Ivy). Sometimes the whole stem will twine around the support (i.e., Morning Glory, Bittersweet). Don't use the "suction cup" type vine on wood, especially if the surface needs periodic repainting. The wood may be damaged by the vine and it's very difficult to get the vine to adhere again once it's been pried off the surface.

Annual vines only last one season but provide very quick results and are especially good in an area for which you have future plans. Try twining plants such as **Black-eyed Susan** (*Thunbergia alata*), a yellow or orange flower with a black centers, or **Morning Glory** (*Ipomoea*) with flowers of blue, pink, white, or red. **Sweet Pea** (*Lathyrus odoratus*) climbs by tendrils and has fragrant flowers in many different colors. Some Sweet Peas may survive our winters.

There are several perennial vines to consider. **Bittersweet** (*Celastrus*) is a twining vine that grows 20' or more, depending on available support. It prefers sun or very light shade. The yellow fall color and bright orange-red berries are an autumn favorite. Each plant is either male or female, both being required to set berries. Varieties are marked by sex so you can be sure to purchase both. Since Bittersweet can become quite invasive, it is best to plant it on poorer soil to help keep it in check.

Clematis produces gorgeous flowers in many beautiful colors. It prefers well-drained, neutral to alkaline soil, and needs generous watering. Clematis likes sun on the top but needs cool, moist roots (achieved by either underplanting with a short annual or perennial, or by mulching). Clematis grow to 8' or more depending upon variety. When planting, place the crown 2" below the soil level. The vine should be tied loosely to its support as it grows. Don't expect full growth the first year.

Dropmore Honeysuckle (*Lonicera hirsutax sempervirens*) is a twining vine that produces red-orange flowers from summer into fall. It has nice, rich green foliage and grows 10'-15'.

John Clayton Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) grows from 10'-20'. Its yellow flowers are fragrant and may attract hummingbirds. After flowering, it produces orange-red berries.

Honeybelle Honeysuckle (*Lonicera hirsutax sempervirens*) also grow 10'-20'. **It was a new introduction for 2009!** Easy to grow and produces fragrant blossoms throughout the season. Hummingbirds and butterflies find these flowers quite attractive. It may produce small red berries in the fall. Although this plant can be grown in partial shade, you will get the best blooming and impact if planted in full sun. Avoid planting in very wet sites.

Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*) climbs with root-like holdfasts and is very vigorous. Even though it sometimes dies back in the winter, it will recover quickly. Its orange-red trumpet-shaped flowers appear in July. Trumpet Vine prefers full sun.

Boston Ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) is good for use on masonry. It climbs by tendrils that have adhesive discs at their tips. Boston Ivy has blue-black berries and good fall color. Although it may die back in winter occasionally, and takes about two years to become well-established, Boston Ivy grows quite vigorously after attaining some age. This vine can also be used as a groundcover.

Englemann Ivy (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is another robust vine that works well on masonry, fences, and arbors. It turns a wonderful dark red in fall and produces blue-black berries.

Blue Moon Wisteria (*Wisteria macrostachya*) is a hardy wisteria that produces blue-violet flowers borne in showy, drooping 12" racemes, from spring to summer. Wonderful for draping over gates and archways. This plant serves as a butterfly nectar source and as a host for butterfly larvae.

