

Vines are plants of ambition. Not content to remain earthbound, they will aim for the sky with leafy determination

and the lofty aspirations of an aviator who has just earned his wings. Although often relegated to the suburban mailbox, vines are wonderfully versatile plants. Needing just a footprint of earth for their roots, they can fit into spaces too small to accommodate shrubs, yet they are capable of covering large areas.

Are you bothered by an unsightly view? A vine may be just the leafy eradicator you need. Does your deck or patio broil in the noontday Georgia sun? A vine can provide welcome, cooling shade. Chosen with care and placed thoughtfully, vines are the workhorses and problem solvers of landscaping.

Barbara Robinson has incorporated over a dozen varieties of climbers and ramblers into her relatively small Brookhaven landscape. "Vines are so useful," she stresses. "Not only for fragrance and beauty, but because they provide the vital element of architecture and structure in the garden. They're too often undervalued."

SEASONAL COLOR

While annuals like pansies and impatiens provide long periods of

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**PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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VIRGINIA TWINHAM-SMITH

Gardening on the Vertical

For landscapes large and small, vines are a gardener's workhorses and problem solvers

Hyacinth bean (*Dolichos lablab*), a vigorous annual vine, quickly covered Barbara Robinson's two front arbors during her garden's first summer, before the wisteria was established enough to make a showing. "Such fantastic growth rates can be a great asset in a new landscape," she comments. Although she doesn't plan to use this vine again (now that the wisteria is reaching for the sky), she highly recommends it for its large clusters of lavender flowers followed by large, reddish-purple seedpods, shown on Page 98, that are as ornamental as the flowers themselves.



color, Robinson also enjoys the more fleeting displays of her perennial vines. The onset of spring is marked by the white, dogwood-shaped blossoms of evergreen clematis (*Clematis armandii*), which light up her narrow side yard. Noted plantsman Don Hastings suggests Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) for early spring color — its bright yellow trumpets appear anytime from February to April.

In Robinson's garden the focus then shifts to a pair of white arbors, which drip purple for several weeks as the wisteria comes into bloom. Other summer-blooming vines to consider include hybrid clematis, popular annuals like morning glories, and tender, tropical selections such as bougainvillea and Mandevilla, which will often bloom long into the fall before a killing frost cuts them down.

Signature vines of the fall include sweet autumn clematis (*Clematis maximowicziana*, formerly *Clematis paniculata*) and silver lace vine (*Polygonum aubertii*), both of which produce a froth of

small white flowers. These produce "a wonderfully frilly, Victorian effect," says Robinson.

FRAGRANCE

The sweet scent of wild honeysuckle (*Lonicera* species) has long been associated with Southern nights. Don Hastings recommends planting the cultivated varieties for showier blooms, noting that they share the hardiness of their woodland cousins. Remember to place scented vines near a door or walkway where their scent will be appreciated. Gardener RoseAnn Durham enjoys the perfume of a confederate jasmine vine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) that she has trained around the outside of her screened-in porch, a favored sitting spot at her Morningside home. Also known as star jasmine, the vine features glossy, dark evergreen foliage and small white star-shaped flowers that produce a scent similar to that of the true jasmines. This vine is marginally hardy in Atlanta, so look for "Madison," a cultivar that is reputed to tolerate cold temperatures.

SMALL SPACES

Even the tiniest piece of earth can accommodate a vine or two. In my own Chamblee garden I make the most of my space by “doubling up” — growing vines over shrubs, up small trees and on top of climbing roses. For example, my climbing “Cecile Brunner” rose, a spring bloomer, plays host to a late summer–blooming clematis cultivar “Comtesse de Bouchaud.” Not only does this technique pack more plants into a small space, it extends the season of interest. Most of my evergreen hollies have also been paired with clematis vines.

Don Hastings suggests planting morning glories together with their close relative the moon vine (*Ipomoea alba*), whose large white flowers open late in the day. “The vines do a good job of competing with each other,” he explains. “And together they make for a more spectacular display — the morning glories put on a show until midday, and then the moon vines take over in mid-afternoon.”

PRIVACY

Robinson credits landscape designer Paula Refi with the idea of siting an arbor, planted with the evergreen *Clematis armandii*, where it will afford the house some seclusion. “Because I have a small lot, with neighbors right on top of me, it’s important to me to have some sort of visual protection,” Robinson explains. “Now when you look out from the house, you see the vines and the arbor. You’re not aware there’s a house just 20 feet away.” Even

when the clematis is not in bloom, its long, strappy leaves remain attractive year-round.

SHADE

Many types of vines, including trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*) and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), grow with rampant abandon and can cover a pergola or arbor in a season or two, shading a patio or walkway more quickly than a tree could. Trumpet vine sports orange trumpet-shaped flowers that attract hummingbirds — but it can become a nuisance, as it spreads by underground runners and often emerges six feet or more from the parent plant. Virginia creeper is primarily a foliage plant, with five leaflets resembling five fingers on a hand.

Deciduous vines can actually help you save energy. Their shade blocks the hot summer sun, reducing air conditioning costs; but in winter, bare stems let the sunlight stream through windows.

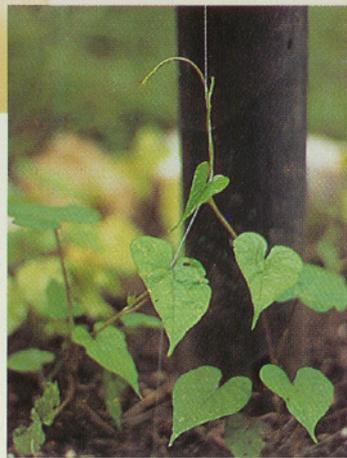
CAMOUFLAGE

Vines are a simple way to hide a ramshackle shed or unsightly garage. Robinson has used vines to soften hard structural elements like walls and fences. For example, a climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea petiolaris*), which thrives in partial shade, helps to blur the rigid lines of a stucco wall. The delicate foliage of *Akebia quinata* hides a utilitarian chain-link fence along the back of Robinson’s property, and its unusual purple flowers are a spring bonus. ▶ ▶ ▶

MORNING GLORY: FAVORITE ANNUAL

While many gardeners choose perennial vines for their hardiness and reliability, RoseAnn Durham celebrates summer with “Heavenly Blue” morning glories (*Ipomoea tricolor*). True to their name, these vines open their glorious azure blooms at dawn, closing them again by midday. Durham’s preferred planting spot is a lamppost she passes by when leaving the house each morning — providing her with a quick spiritual lift that is “almost as good as coffee.”

Planting morning glories is a springtime ritual for Durham. The seed germinates best in cool soil after all danger of frost is past, so Durham usually plants in March. Like sweet pea seed, morning glory seed has a hard coating that should be scratched or nicked to promote germination. Durham has her own trick for this — she empties the packet into the blender and gives it a quick pulse or two. “The seeds sprout in just a few days this way,” she claims. Durham also has perfected her technique for transforming the lamppost into a lush pyramid of flowering vines. From several stakes driven into the ground around the base, she strings twine to the top of the post. As the seedlings grow, she coaxes them up the twine. “I get a much fuller look this way than if I were growing them directly on the post,” she says.



CLEMATIS: FAVORITE PERENNIAL

Widely grown for their colorful flowers, clematis are among the most popular of vines. Many will attain heights of only 6 to 12 feet, making them ideal for growing over shrubs or near other plants where a more rampant grower would smother its neighbors. Here are some tips for producing lovely clematis vines:

- Consider growing the species clematis, which may produce more abundant, although smaller blooms than the hybrids. Among the most charming are varieties of *Clematis alpina*, which produce nodding bell-shaped flowers, quite different from the open saucer-shaped blooms of the hybrids. *Clematis alpina* is usually among the earliest clematis to bloom in the spring. Another species, *Clematis tangutica*, also produces bell-shaped blooms of a soft yellow. This midsummer/fall bloomer is the only yellow clematis. But be careful; some vines like *Clematis montana*, sweet autumn clematis and the evergreen *Clematis armandii* are capable of reaching 15 to 20 feet. Choose a site for these carefully.
- Provide all clematis with a cool root run, advises Don Hastings. To shade the root area, you can mulch it with pine straw or bark chunks. But Hastings prefers to knock the bottom out of an 8-inch clay flowerpot and invert it over the crown of the plant, with the vine protruding through the bottom. In addition to keeping the soil cool, the pot gives the base of the plant a bit of protection.
- Prune clematis according to bloom times. Spring bloomers, which bloom on the previous year's growth, require pruning only for shaping. Cut them back immediately after they finish blooming. Varieties that bloom in early summer have flowers that form on stems which grow from the previous season's leaf axil buds. In early spring cut these back to a pair of strong buds on all stems. Late-summer or fall bloomers, which produce flowers on the current season's growth, will bloom most profusely if cut back each spring, before new growth starts, to between 12 and 18 inches from the ground.

WHERE TO GROW VINES

Before deciding on a support for a particular vine, you must understand how the vine climbs. Vines that climb by clinging, which include trumpet creeper, climbing hydrangea and English ivy, adhere to a surface with tiny aerial rootlets that grow from the stems. They can damage wooden siding and weaken the mortar in a masonry wall and are therefore most safely grown on a trellis or other structure that is placed six inches away from the building.

Vines that climb by grasping, like grape (*Vitis* species), climb by latching onto supports with tendrils. Clematis are also considered a grasping vine, as they use their petioles, or leaf stems, to grab onto their support. These vines can most easily grasp wires or thin lattice pieces that are spaced closely together. An ornamental trellis with wide open spaces should be backed with chicken wire or some similar material to help grasping vines get a toehold.

Vines that climb by twining climb by coiling themselves around or through their support and do well on chunkier supports such as lampposts and porch pillars. They will also weave themselves in and out of open latticework as they head upward.

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Pike Family Nurseries (multiple locations) or Hastings Nature & Garden Center (2350 Cheshire Bridge Road, (404) 321-6981) stock vines and basic trellises. Here are some mail-order vine sources:

Park Seed Company

(seeds for many hard-to-find annual vines)
Cokesbury Road
Greenwood, SC 29647
1 (800) 845-3369

Wayside Gardens

(common and hard-to-find vines)
1 Garden Lane
Hodges, SC 29695
1 (800) 845-1124

Gardener's Supply Company

(several arches, arbors and trellises)
128 Intervale Road
Burlington, VT 05401
1 (800) 863-1700

Kinsman Company

(arches, arbors and trellises)
River Road
Point Pleasant, PA 18950
1 (800) 733-4146