VINES AND TWINING CLIMBERS

Vines and twining climbers have many uses in the garden and can be planted almost anywhere. They can form a tapestry on walls and fences, create a background for more colorful foreground shrubs and flowers, climb up posts or over pergolas and other trellis structures, create a windbreak, shade an area, or screen an unwanted view. Since they take up only a small amount of room at ground level, they add vertical interest in small, restricted areas. Vines are very colorful, both in flowering characteristics and in leaf coloring. Some provide fruits for our tables or for wildlife. A less common use for vines is to grow them among other tall plants or trees that may lack their own visual interest. Keep in mind not to use vines that are more vigorous than the host plant so as not to overtake it.

It is important to consider the nature and weight of the vine you select. Some vines are light and can be used on a lightweight trellis without causing problems. Others, like wisteria, can become heavy enough to pull down patio structures. Some vines can also be successfully grown in containers, especially those that are not hardy and need to be stored inside over the winter.

The vine’s method of attachment will help you decide on the design of your structure.

There are two different ways that vines cling to structures. Some vines climb by twining onto a trellis or wire support with grasping tendrils. Other vines have aerial rootlets that cling to rough walls and tree trunks.

There are four main types of vines, categorized according to how they attach to their support.

- **Vines with tendrils**: Tendrils are threadlike growth on stems or leaves that reach out and spiral around their support. Tendrils grow straight until they touch a potential support (sometimes another stem or wire) then contract into a spiral. Vines with tendrils do best with narrow supports that the tendrils can easily reach and spiral around. Examples of vines with tendrils include Crossvine (bignonia), Passion Vine and Vitis.

- **Clinging vines**: Clinging vines have special growths along the stem that help them to attach to flat surfaces including walls. There are several ways that clinging vines attach: some have suction-like disks in their tendrils; others have claws that can hook into irregularities in the supporting surface; and a third type has aerial rootlets along the stem that can cling to virtually anything. These types of holdfasts can be very damaging to surfaces. The location of the arbor for these vines should be selected to minimize contact and subsequent damage of patios, homes or other buildings. Examples of clinging vines include Trumpet Creeper, Trumpet Vine, Parthenocissus and Japanese Hydrangea vine.

- **Twining vines**: As new growth emerges, twining vines will spiral around whatever they meet- their planned structure, or other stems of the same plant or other plants nearby. Most twining vines coil too tightly to wrap around trellis posts, so additional support of string or wire will be needed. Examples of
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twining vines include Clematis, Carolina Jessamine, Jasmine, Chilean Bellflower, Kiwi, Chocolate vine, California Dutchmans’ Pipe, Staff vine, Morning Glory, Honeysuckle, Chilean Jasmine and Wisteria.

- **Vines that require tying**: Other vines have none of the above attachment methods. They will require tying to train them to their support. Climbing roses fall into this category. Once you have selected the type of vine you desire, you can choose a trellis, arbor, or pergola to support the vine’s particular growth habit. Situate the structure in a location that best suits your selected vines.

Many vines do well in ordinary soil and require only an average amount of water. Keep in mind that most vines like an annual feeding in the spring and almost all vines require pruning each year. Vines are sold in containers; a few deciduous kinds (example roses and grapes) are available bare-root.

Perennial, annual and exotic vines suitable for Inland Northwest climates are listed below:

**PERENNIAL VINES AND TWINING CLIMBERS**

*Akebia quinata* (Five leaf akebia) A twining climber, semi-evergreen in milder winters, has vanilla-scented purple flowers in spring, then purplish fruits. Grows to 30’ or more in sun and well-drained soil.

*Actinidia deliciosa* (Kiwi) A deciduous climber, with brown skinned berries with green pulp, harvest in late fall. They grow up to 28’ tall and prefer moist, warm conditions.

*Actinidia kolomikta* (Kolomikta actinidia) A deciduous, twining climber, leaves are 3”-6” long with the upper portions often white and pink and the lower leaves green. Grows up to 12’ tall, needs sun and well-drained soil.

*Aristolochia durior* (Dutchman’s Pipe) An extremely vigorous twining vine that produces yellow-green flowers shaped like a meerschaum pipe in May and June. Grows up to 30’ tall, in shade or sun preferring moist soil. The vine should be pruned in late winter to control growth.

*Campsis radicans* (Trumpet creeper) An aerial rootlet clinging vine with orange flowers in late summer. It grows to 40’, likes sun and well-drained soil.

*Celastrus scandens* (American Bittersweet) A twining vine that needs both male and female plants to produce the reddish-yellow capsules which open in early autumn to show the berries. Grows up to 20’ tall that likes full sun to light shade. Be sure to distinguish it from the invasive bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). Prune in late winter or early spring.

*Clematis sp.* (Clematis) A deciduous twining climber, with cultivars available in many different flower colors and climbing heights. They like full sun and shaded roots.

*Humulus sp.* (Hop) A fast-growing, deciduous climber with large, deeply lobed attractive leaves, grows in sun, with sufficient water, up to 25’.

*Hydrangea anomala petiolaris* (Climbing hydrangea) A deciduous rootlet climber, with toothed leaves and lacy white flower caps in summer, up to 50’, needs sun to part shade, and moist, not soggy, conditions. Very slow grower first three years.

*Lonicera sempervirens* (Coral honeysuckle) Twining climber with green saucer-like leaves, salmon to orange flowers, grows to 12’, needs part shade and well-drained soil.

*Parthenocissus tricuspidata* (Boston ivy) A deciduous tendril climber, with gorgeous fall coloring, exceptional for covering large wall areas, grows to 70’, needs partial shade, well-drained soil, and has blue berries.

*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper) A deciduous aerial rootlet climber and can cover a whole building. Its five-lobed leaves turn red in fall.

*Polygonum baldschuanicum* (Fleece flower) Deciduous, twining climber, pink or white flowers in hanging panicles in summer and fall, grows to 40’, needs sun, moist soils.
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*Schizophragma hydrangeoides* (Japanese Hydrangea Vine) A slow-growing vine with silver or pewter heart-shaped leaves that may take a few years to flower. Although not a true hydrangea it produces lacecap hydrangea-like white blooms that are 5”-8” in diameter in July. It has reddish-brown stems for winter contrast and can be pruned in late winter. Grows up to 25’ tall and prefers part to full shade.

*Vitis sp.* (Grape) A deciduous twining vine, producing various types of grape fruits, likes very hot, dry summers, full sun.

*Wisteria sp.* (Wisteria) A deciduous, twining climber, with white or lavender fragrant flowers in racemes, grows to 30’ needs sun, and well-drained soil. May not bloom for several years.

**ANNUAL VINES AND TWINING CLIMBERS**

*Fabaceae* (Scarlet runner bean) Very vigorous vines with bright scarlet flowers. Beans are edible when young or may be shelled out and cooked when mature.

*Lathyrus odoratus* (Sweet pea) A vigorous tendril climber that looks like a pea plant, with very fragrant flowers during the summer and fall. It grows to 6’, likes sun and well-drained soil.

*Ipomoea sp.* (Ivy-leafed morning-glory) A twining climber, heart-shaped leaves, funnel shaped flowers in pink, red, purple, or blue in summer. Grows in sun and in well-drained soil.

*Tropaeolum sp.* (Nasturtium varieties) A climber with blue-green leaves and yellow-orange flowers. It grows from 6’-10’, likes sun and well-drained soil.

*Thunbergia alata* (Black-eyed Susan vine) A fast-growing annual twining climber with toothed leaves and small orange-yellow flowers with brown centers. It blooms in early summer to early fall. It grows up to 10 in sun and well-drained soil.

**EXOTIC TROPICAL VINES & TWINING CLIMBERS FOR CONTAINERS (over-winter indoors)**

*Hoya sp.* (Wax plant) Evergreen, twining root climber, with fragrant, star-shaped pink or white flowers in summer, growing to 15’. It likes partial shade and well-drained soil.

*Mandevilla* An evergreen, twining vine with rose-colored flowers in early summer, grows to 10’. It is probably not as exuberant in a container.

*Solanum jasminoides* (Potato vine) A twining vine, white flowers in clusters, blooms all summer.

*Trachelospermum jasminoides* (Star jasmine) An evergreen twining climber, with very fragrant white flowers in summer. Grows up to 28,’ and needs sun and well-drained soil.

*Passiflora sp.* (Passionflower) Fast-growing evergreen tendril climber, has white flowers with purple striations in summer, fruits are purple or yellow. It grows to 30’ in sun and well-drained soil.