

ACTON GARDEN CLUB
HORTICULTURAL HINTS
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CONSIDER PLANTING A VERTICAL FLOWERING VINE

This season as you begin planning for some additional plants for your garden consider adding a vertical dimension to your garden with a flowering vine. Vertical garden elements can draw attention to an area or disguise an unattractive view.

Flowering vines come in a variety of sizes and colors and are both annual and perennial types. Vines can be grown up a trellis, arbor, pergola, tuteur, chain link or wooden fence, or a wall depending on the attachment method.

TYPES OF VINES

Vines are classified by their climbing method.

- **Clinging**: Some vines have clasp type structures called tendrils which are leafless plant stems that grasp objects and coil around them. Examples are members of the grape family (*Vitis*), passion flowers (*Passiflora*) and perennial sweet peas (*Lathyrus latifolius*). Holdfasts are root-like extensions of stems that attach to structures. Thorns on a climbing rose support its upward climb but needs training.
- **Twining**: Stems of some flowering vines spiral or twist around structures of other plants as they climb. Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) and chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*) are twiners. Some may need a sturdy support such as, wisteria,
- **Aerial Rootlets**: English ivy (*Hedera helix*) need no help to climb
- **Sprawling**: Some flowering vines do not have structures that attach them to objects. They produce long stems that have to be tied to a support such as a stake or woven through a lattice.

TRAINING VINES

All vines have a common characteristic, rampant growth and a limp nature.

Clinging vines that use tendrils need slender supports to clasp, such as wire, a thin stake, thin string, or a shepherd's hook. If these vines cannot find an outside support, they'll start clasping their own stems, leading to a big tangle.

Twining vines need stakes or posts to coil around. Care should be taken that stakes or posts are strong enough to hold the type of vines they need to support

Aerial Rootlets need no help to climb but need some control in the beginning may latch onto the side of a house, be sure to prune them away from windows and gutters and fish them out of cracks.

Hooks: Some, vines use hooks to grab onto a support to climb upward. The thorns of a climbing rose help gain purchase in a tree trunk or wood latticework, but the canes still need a little training. They may need to be woven through a trellis occasionally or need to be tied to a support. Thorns on a rose are like hooks to climb but need training.

Be sure to research vines for information regarding supporting the vine's weight and its maintenance.

Vines generally with holdfasts can climb masonry brick or stone. However, if there are loose joints or mortar, vines can get into them and further loosen them.

Vines should not climb on wooden frame or stucco houses. Moisture can become trapped between the holdfasts and the wood promoting decay. Another issue is vines can and will find openings around windows, roof tiles, frames, fascia, gutters, ventilation louvers and shutters and work their way behind and into such places and possibly push them away from the structure. Timely pruning can prevent this.

DESIGN LOCATIONS

- Position a short flowering vine behind your mailbox post for a flowering mailbox cover.
- Grow on a tall shepherd's hook and hang a bird feeder from the hook.
- Plant a scrambling flowering vine to cascade over a terraced garden.
- Use flowering vines to cover a steep slope for erosion control.
- Fill hanging baskets with scrambling flowering vines for your deck or patio.
- Screen your porch for privacy.
- Add a trellis in front of one of the walls on a shed or garage. (Be sure to leave some space between the trellis and the wall for air circulation.)
- Grow up a maple or oak tree.

INVASIVE VERSUS AGGRESSIVE GROWERS

As you consider a vine for the garden, be sure to study its characteristics. Check to see if it is invasive in Massachusetts. The USDA website definition is "An invasive species is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health."

The University of Illinois Extension Service defines aggressive plants as those that have other areas where the plant is not wanted or is intended to be growing. This is not the same as being identified as being invasive.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FLOWERING VINES

WISTERIA

Zones: 5-9, full sun, partial shade, 10-50 feet long, 4-20 feet wide. tendrils, pea-like flowers in shades of lavender, purple, white or blue.

CLEMATIS

Zones: 3-10, full sun, partial shade, 2-50 feet tall, 2-10 feet wide, petiole tendrils, range of colors and shapes. (I grow an autumn clematis on a tuteur.)

HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera* sp.)

Zones: 4-10, full sun-partial shade, 8-10 feet tall, 3-30 feet wide, tendrils, fragrant (some unscented) tubular flowers, that attract hummingbirds, butterflies and other insect pollinators, yellow, orange, red, white or bicolored flowers.

CLIMBING HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*)

Zones: 4-9, full sun-partial shade, 30-50 feet tall, 5-6 feet wide, aerial rootlets, suitable for woodland gardens, panicle white flowers, needs sturdy support such as a mature fir or oak tree. (I grow it on an oak tree.)

TRUMPET VINE (*Campis radicans*)

Zones: 4-9, full sun, partial shade, 20-40 feet tall, 5-10 feet wide, aerial roots, large funnel-shaped flowers in red, orange, or yellow. Use as screening on arbor or pergola large enough to support its weight.

CHOCOLATE VINE (*Akebia quinata*)

Zones: 4-8, full sun-partial shade, 20-40 feet tall, 6-9 feet wide, twinning stems, dangling clusters of deep purple flowers. (*I have this one climbing an old basketball pole—stems on the ground need to be cut as they spread*).

FALSE HYDRANGEA VINE (*Schizophragma hydrangeoides*)

Zones 5-8, partial sun to full shade, 20-50 feet tall, 6-10 feet wide, aerial rootlets, flowers similar to the climbing hydrangea, white or cream white. Grow in a woodland setting, training to a tree or structure sturdy enough to hold its weight. (*I grow this vine on a mature oak tree.*)

Resources:

Better Homes and Gardens, "Vertical Gardening", Deb Wiley, August 27, 2022

Garden Design "Add a New Dimension to your Landscape with Vertical Vines", Janet Loughrey, 2022

Fine Gardening Magazine, "Types of Climbing Vines", Marie Hofer

University of Illinois Extension Service, Vines, 2023

Judy Dembsey

Environmental Education