

Vertical Gardening with Vines

Trees and shrubs are normally the first items that come to mind when thinking of adding vertical interest to your landscape, and rightfully so, but don't miss the boat with vines. Vines offer more versatility. While trees, etc. are strictly permanent fixtures, vines can be either permanent or temporary depending on preference. Vines grow in almost any kind of conditions - sun, shade, wet, dry, fertile or poor soils. Vines can be trained to grow on other structures or let to ramble along the ground or over other plants.

Boston ivy, wintercreeper, clematis, trumpet vines, wisteria, hops, honeysuckle, climbing hydrangeas and climbing roses are examples of permanent or perennial vines. Most perennial vines need another permanent structure to climb upon, but some are designed to ramble or use other plants for support. Remember, these are permanent fixtures in your garden and once established can be quite prolific. Keep this in mind when selecting a site.

Mandevilla, morning glory, scarlet runner bean, black-eyed susan, jasmine and ornamental sweet potato are examples of temporary or annual vines. Annual vines also need support, but not necessarily permanent. Portable obelisks, trellises and arbors are often used in conjunction with annual vines. Since these vines only prosper through the growing season and will not return the next, mobility and diversity are their main appeal. Gardens take on a whole new look from year to year. One year you may have morning glories growing on an obelisk in one part of the garden, and the next year scarlet runner bean in a completely different area, or both. Annual vines can also be used in containers on a deck or patio and even in window boxes.

The growth habits of vines allow you to merge boundaries and soften harsh edges. Vines growing on a house will link it with adjacent gardens and remove the sharp contrast between them. The landscape will flow from one end to another without harsh interruption.

Vines can be used to create a garden room by creating green, growing walls surrounding specific areas or the entire yard. Create these by covering fencing or stone / brick walls with Boston ivy or other prolific vines. An arching arbor covered with a completely different vine creates an exciting entrance.

Plant vines to screen out unsightly areas or to hide deteriorating or unattractive structures. Wintercreeper will turn an ugly concrete wall into a stunning backdrop or cover a chain-link fence with a trumpet vine to create a flowering wall of color. Vines planted under dead trees and allowed to climb and intertwine among the branches give the tree the illusion of life.

Vines can also be allowed to ramble along the ground or over existing plants. Plants that flower early in spring and then either die back or simply remain green can be the support for a summer flowering vine to extend color in a garden. Clematis is a great vine for this because it adds a lot of color without creating too much shade for the existing plants. Annual vines like mandevilla or jasmine also work well in this aspect.

Versatility is the hallmark of vines. You can grow vines for shade, food, foliage, flowers or fruit and in just about any location. If vines aren't part of your landscape yet, take a closer look around and envision what a beautiful vine might do for your landscape. The possibilities are endless.

Happy Gardening!