

# VINES FOR Alabama Landscapes

Vines are among the most versatile plants in the landscape. Most people associate vines with arbors or trellises, but they can also be used to screen unsightly views; to provide privacy on patios; to lend character to a stone, block, or stucco wall; to break up the monotony of a long chain link fence; to accent or soften the architectural details of a building; or as a ground cover where turfgrass is either undesirable or will not grow.

Landscape designers often use vines on trees to provide a new dimension to the tree canopy. An oak tree bearing bright orange flowers of Cross Vine, for instance, is sure to create a conversation piece in the landscape. Some vines, such as Bougainvillea or Allamanda, are excellent for use in patio pots or hanging baskets. Moonvine adds a wonderful fragrance with an evening bloom. Honeysuckle and Trumpet Creeper are prized for their flowers, while other vines, such as Five-leaf Akebia, Climbing Fig, and Ivy, are grown for their foliage. Wisteria is sometimes trained as a single-standing specimen or small tree in the landscape.

## Selecting Vines

When selecting vines, there are a number of factors to consider, including their intended use, location in the landscape (i.e., sun vs. shade), plant hardiness zones, soil adaptability, type of support needed, and color of bloom or foliage characteristics. In addition, one also needs to consider the maintenance requirement. Will the vine need constant pruning to keep it within bounds? Certain fast-growing vines, such as wisteria and common honeysuckle, require a great deal of routine pruning. If allowed to spread without restraint, their profuse growth can cover trees and shrubs, reducing light and aeration

within the canopy. Kudzu is an excellent example of this. Some vines can even injure or kill small trees by wrapping around them and cutting off nutrient flow. Other vines, such as Sweet Autumn Clematis, will disperse their seeds after flowering and may pop up in areas where they are not wanted.

Another important consideration is the amount of training a vine requires. Some vines cling and climb naturally while others must be trained to follow the supporting wire, pole, or other structure. Therefore, the type of structure on which you intend to grow vines will influence the type of vine you choose.

Annual vines are very popular, such as Moonvine (*Ipoema alba*), Black-eyed Susan Vine (*Thunbergia alata*), Sweet Pea (*Lathyrus odorata*), Purple Hyacinth Bean (*Dolichos lablab*), and Morning Glory (*Ipomoea spp.*). Annual vines are grown from seed each year. Perennial vines persist from year to year. Foliage may die back in winter and re-sprout in spring. Perennial vine favorites include Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis spp.*), Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), Wisteria (*Wisteria spp.*), and Clematis (*Clematis hybrida*). See the table at the end of this publication for a listing of favorite vines and their characteristics.

## Types of Climbing Vines

Most vines, except those grown as ground covers or in pots, require some type of support to grow. Climbing vines can be separated into three basic types: clinging, twining, and winding.

Climbing vines grasp onto a rough surface by means of rootlets or adhesive disks. Climbing Fig (*Ficus pumila*), English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Confederate Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), and Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*) are examples of climbers. These vines are often used to cover solid surfaces, such as walls and fences. However, clinging vines may loosen mortar between bricks over time and are difficult to remove once they have become anchored. Their method of climbing can damage wood by clinging to it too closely, growing up between boards or siding, preventing good air

circulation, and promoting wood decay. Therefore, clinging vines are best suited for trellises or arbors away from solid surfaces.

Twining vines climb by encircling upright supports, such as poles, wires, and lattices. These vines require mechanical training to follow a support. Examples are Mandevilla (*Mandevilla splendens*), Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), and Morning Glory (*Ipomoea spp.*)

Winding vines climb by means of tendrils: slim, flexible, leafless stems that wrap around anything they contact. One of the best known examples of this type of vine is the Muscadine Grape. Ornamental vines that fall into this category include Maypop (*Passiflora spp.*), Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), Clematis (*Clematis hybrida*), and Cross Vine (*Bignonia capreolata*).

## Location in the Landscape

Most flowering vines require at least one-half day of sun to be vigorous and bloom abundantly. Other vines, such as variegated English ivy, will develop more vivid leaf patterns when provided a few hours of morning sun.

## Vine Supports

Twining- and winding-type vines are supported best on wires, lattices, trellises, and arbors. They need some type of support to help them along when grown on a flat surface.

It is recommended that vine supports be constructed from sturdy, durable materials. Always use treated lumber for outdoor structures. Redwood, cedar, and cypress are particularly durable in the outdoor environment. A wood preservative or water seal applied after construction will also help prolong the life of the structure. Wrought iron also makes an excellent support. Use aluminum or copper wire to attach plants because both are resistant to rusting.

## Planting

Most vines grow best in fertile, well-drained soils. Bare-root vines are best transplanted during the fall or winter months, while container-grown vines can be planted any time of year, provided irrigation is available.

If you determine that organic matter is needed to improve the soil, incorporate it into the top 12 inches of soil by rototilling before you dig the planting hole. Compost is an excellent organic amendment.

Dig the planting hole two times wider than the root ball and to the depth of the root ball or slightly shallower. Make certain the top of the root ball is

level with or slightly shallower than the soil surface, then backfill with soil removed from the hole, tamping it lightly to eliminate air pockets. Water immediately after planting and use mulch on the soil surface to keep moisture in the soil.

An economical way to plant a large number of vines as a ground cover is by purchasing and planting rooted cuttings or "liner" plants. Ask your local nurseryman about the availability of liners.

## Fertilization

If you plant during fall and winter, wait until spring to fertilize. If you plant in the spring and summer, wait 4 to 6 weeks for the plants to get established before fertilizing. Then apply a light sprinkling (about a tablespoon) of a landscape fertilizer, such as 12-4-6 or similar analysis fertilizer, around the perimeter of the planting hole and water it in.

Once established, fertilize in early spring and midsummer with a landscape fertilizer, such as 12-4-6, at a rate of 1½ pounds per 100 square feet. A soil sample taken to your county Extension office for analysis can help you determine your soil's precise nutritional needs.

## Pruning

Vines have different pruning requirements. Generally, pruning is done to remove dead, diseased, and damaged wood; to reduce size; and to promote branching. Vigorous vines, such as honeysuckle, trumpet vine, and wisteria, may require regular pruning to keep them confined to the support.

As a general rule, flowering vines should be pruned after they bloom. This is particularly true for vines such as wisteria and spring-flowering clematis that bloom on previous season's growth. Pruning these vines before they bloom will reduce flowering.

The amount of pruning depends on the vigor of the vine and the amount of foliage you desire. Some vines will form layer upon layer of growth unless they are thinned out regularly. Wisteria, for instance, requires annual pruning to reduce the amount of vegetative growth. Removing approximately one-third of the canopy of wisteria each year will encourage the production of short spurs on the remaining branches that will bear next season's flowers.

## Propagation

Most annual vines are propagated from seed. Perennial vines are often propagated from cutting, vegetative division, or layering. Refer to a good plant book for specific propagating technique recommendations for each vine.

# Recommended Vines for Alabama Landscape

Botanical Name/ Common Name	Zone	Flower Color	Season of Bloom	Leaf Type <sup>1</sup>	Light Require- ments	Climb- ing Habits <sup>2</sup>	Landscape Use <sup>3</sup>				Remarks
							A	F	T	W	
<b>Perennial Vines</b>											
<i>Akebia quinata</i> Five-leaf Akebia	5-9	Purple/ brown	Spring	E	Full sun/ Partial shade	T	X	X	X		Very attractive foliage. Prized for its foliage. Flower is not showy. A variegated form is available in trade.
<i>Bignonia capreolata</i> Cross Vine	6-10	Red/ yellow	Spring	E	Full sun/ Partial shade	T,C	X	X	X	X	Prefers acid soil. Tolerates moist and dry soils. Flowers visited by hummingbirds, foliage browsed by deer.
<i>Bougainvillea</i> Spp./cultivars Bougainvillea	9-11	Magenta/ white/ orange/ yellow	Summer	E	Full sun/ Partial shade	C	X	X	X		Grow as container plants in N. Alabama. Perennial in S. AL. Can be trained as a shrub. Has thorns.
<i>Campsis</i> spp./cultivars Trumpet Creeper	7-8	Orange/ red/coral	Summer	D	Full sun	C	X	X	X		Very vigorous. Several nice cultivars, such as 'Madame Galen'. Native of Eastern U.S. May require support.
<i>Clematis armandii</i> Evergreen Clematis	7	White	Spring	E	Full sun	T	X	X	X		Fast-growing with fragrant flower. Can be invasive.
<i>Clematis hybrida</i> Large-Flowered Clematis	6-8	Many	Spring	D	Full sun/ Partial shade	T	X	X	X		One of the most popular vines. Can be used effectively on trellises, arbors, or mailboxes but also can be used as a ground cover to trail over rocks or stone walls.
<i>Decumaria barbara</i> Climbing Hydrangea	6-9	White	Spring	D	Full sun/ Part shade	C,T	X	X	X	X	Honey-scented blooms, self-clinging and high climber. Attracts butterflies.
<i>Euonymus fortunei</i> Wintercreeper Euonymus	5-10	Insignificant	Spring	E	Full sun/ Partial shade	C	X	X	X		Can be used in containers or as ground cover. Many cultivars available having many coloration of leaves. Adult forms can be grown as shrubs. Moderately slow growers.
<i>Fatshedera lizei</i> Bush Ivy	7-8	Pale green	Fall	E	Partial shade	T,W				X	Excellent ground cover. Can be trained for walls. Requires support. Rapid growth.
<i>Ficus pumila</i> Climbing Fig	8	None	N/A	E	Partial shade/ Shade	C				X	Likes humid hot weather. Rapid growth rate. Great for masonry.
<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i> Carolina Jessamine, Poor Man's Rope	6-8	Yellow	Spring	E	Full sun/ Partial shade	T	X	X	X		Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. A hybrid called 'Rankanii' blooms both spring and fall.
<i>Hedera helix</i> English Ivy	6-8	Nondistinct		E	Partial shade to full sun	C	X	X	X		Can be used in containers or as ground cover. Many cultivars available having many coloration of leaves. Adult forms can be grown as shrubs.
<i>Lathyrus latifolius</i> Everlasting Pea	3-10	Pink/rose/ yellow/ white/blue	Spring/ Summer	D	Full sun	C,T	X	X	X		Needs support, but is good climber. Old fashioned favorite, flowers nonfragrant.

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							A	F	T	W	
<b>Perennial Vines</b>											
<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> Trumpet Honeysuckle	6-8	Orange/ red/ yellow	Spring	D	Full sun	W,T	X	X	X		Several outstanding cultivars are in the trade, including 'Alabama Crimson', 'Magnifica', 'Leo', and 'Sulphuea'.
<i>Lonicera x Heckrottii</i> Climbing Honeysuckle	5-9	Carmine/ yellow	Spring/ Summer	Semi E	Full sun/ Partial shade	W,T	X	X	X		Described as one of the most handsome of climbing honeysuckles.
<i>Lygodium japonicum</i> Japanese Climbing Fern		Indistinct		D	Shade	T	X	X	X		A delicate fernlike vine that tolerates occasional drought. Needs well-drained soil and light shade. Requires little fertilizer. Leaves are lime-green.
<i>Parthenocissus tricuspidata</i> Boston Ivy	6,7,8	Insignificant		D	Full sun	C	X	X	X		Glossy green leaves shaped like maple leaves with three leaflets. Bears blue-green berries enjoyed by birds. Brilliant red color in the fall is the outstanding feature. Cultivars available.
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> Virginia Creeper	6,7,8	Insignificant		D	Full sun	C	X	X	X		Vigorous vine with five leaflets. Fiery red color in fall. Berries loved by birds. Regular pruning required to keep in bounds.
<i>Passiflora incarnata</i> Passion Vine or Maypop	10-11	Many colors: pink/ red/ purple/ white etc.	Summer	D	Full sun	C	X	X	X	X	Can be grown as a container plant. Very vigorous. Many new cultivars are not hardy outdoors and should be grown in containers.
<i>Polygonum aubertii</i> Silver Lace Vine (Fleecevine)	4-9	Pinkish white panicles	Summer	D	Full Sun	T	X	X	X	X	Good salt tolerance for use in coastal areas. Tolerates poor soil. A Chinese introduction.
<i>Rosa banksiae</i> Lady Banks' Rose	7-9	White/ yellow slightly fragrant	Spring	D	Full Sun	W	X	X	X		No thorns. Double and single flower forms. Require support. Exfoliating bark with age.
<i>Smilax smallii</i> Jackson Vine	6,7,8	N/A	N/A	E	Sun/ Shade	C	X	X	X		Foliage is cut and used in Christmas and wedding decorations. Forms dense screen on fences and trellises.
<i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i> Asiatic Jasmine, Yellow Star-Jasmine	7,8	Pale yellow	Summer	E	Part shade	T	X	X	X	X	Used primarily as ground covers. Elegant and interesting foliage. Fragrant star-shaped flowers.
<i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i> Confederate Jasmine, Star Jasmine	8-11	White	Summer	E	Full sun/ Part shade	T,C	X	X	X		Can be used as a ground cover. Valued for its perfumed star-shaped flowers. Can grow up to 21 feet.

<sup>1</sup>Leaf type: E = Evergreen, D = Deciduous

<sup>2</sup>Climbing Habit: T = Twining, C= Clinging, W = Winding

<sup>3</sup>Landscape use: A = Arbors, F = Fences, T = Trellises, W = Walls

Botanical Name/ Common Name	Flower Color	Leaf Type	Light Requirements	Remarks
<b>Annual Vines</b>				
<i>Allamanda cathartica</i> Golden Trumpet, Allamanda	Yellow	Lance- shaped	Full sun/ Partial shade	Fast growing up to 15 ft. Bears large trumpet-shaped flowers. Great wall covers. Can be grown in containers.
<i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> Love-in-a-puff	Small white Green seed pods	Delicate lobed	Full sun to partial shade	Green papery seed pods are the most attractive feature. Each pod contains three seeds with heart-shaped markings.
<i>Dolichos lablab</i> Purple Hyacinth Bean	Purple blossom spikes followed by purple bean pods	Purplish green	Full sun	A large vine, easy to grow. Can grow in poor soil.
<i>Ipomoea alba</i> Moonvine	Large white flowers-open in the evening and last through the night.	Green heart-shaped	Full sun	Prefers well-drained soil. Soak seeds overnight and nick seed coat before planting.
<i>Ipomoea batatas</i> Ornamental Sweet Potato Vine	Grown for its foliage	Deep dark purple lobed-shaped leaves	Full sun	A striking contrast in any garden. Also attractive in hanging baskets. Two popular cultivars are 'Blackie' with burgundy foliage and 'Margarite'.
<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i> Morning Glory	4 to 5 inch flowers in white, blue or red	Olive colored heart-shaped and lobed	Full sun	Soak seeds overnight and nick them before planting. Drought tolerant.
<i>Ipomoea quamoclit X multifida</i> Cypress Vine (Cardinal Vine)	Small brilliant red flowers	Fern type foliage	Full sun to partial shade	Soak and nick the seeds before planting. Great attractor for hummingbirds and butterflies. Very vigorous and fast growing.
<i>Lathyrus odorata</i> Annual Sweet Pea	Wide range of vivid colors		Full sun/Part shade	Not heat tolerant. Primary used as a colorful sweet-scented vine. Makes great cut flowers. Good climber. Numerous color varieties.
<i>Mandevilla splendens</i> Mandevilla	Pink funnel-shaped flowers	Leathery dark green	Full sun or partial shade	Tropical vine can be overwintered indoors.
<i>Mina lobata</i> Firecracker Vine or Crimson Star Glory	Scarlet/yellow/orange/scarlet buds open to cream and orange	3-lobed	Full sun to partial shade	Vigorous climbing vine from Mexico.
<i>Phaseolus coccineus</i> Scarlet Runner Bean	Brilliant red	Lobed arrow-shaped	Full sun to partial shade	Pods are edible when young or wait to use as shelled beans.
<i>Thunbergia alata</i> Black-eyed Susan	White/buff/orange/yellow with dark eyes	Arrow-shaped foliage	Full sun	Great for arbors or containers.
<i>Tropaeolum spp.</i> Climbing Nasturtium	Orange to yellow to creamy/lightly fragrant/edible	Roundish/edible	Full sun	Commonly used for salads. Tolerate neglect and poor soil. Leaves and flowers are often used in salad to add their peppery flavor.



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