



ALMANAC

Thursday, May 1, 2025



ORDER YOUR ALMANAC TODAY!

[HOME](#) > [GARDENING](#) > [GROWING GUIDES](#)

How to Grow Bougainvilleas: The Complete Bougainvillea Flower Guide



Photo Credit: Kristi Blokhin/Shutterstock

Bo *Bougainvillea*
tan *spp.*
ica :
I
Na
me
Pla Flower
nt

FREE GUIDE!

Su Full Sun

n

Ex

po-

sur

e:

Soi Varies

I

pH

:

Blo Varies

om

Ti

me

:

Flo Pink,

we Purple,

r Red

Col

or:

Ha 9, 10,

rdi- 11

ne

ss

Zo

ne:

Planting, Growing, and Caring for Bougainvilles

Last Updated: April 15, 2024

Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips

ADVERTISEMENT

The Almanac Garden Planner - Use It Free for 7 Days!



Plan your 2025 garden with our
award-winning Garden Planner.

A tropical vining plant, bougainvilleas catch your eye with cascades of colorful blossoms, often along walls, fences, and trellises. Sun-loving and drought-resistant, bougainvilleas are tough, rigorous, and easy to grow. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for bougainvilleas.

ADVERTISEMENT

About Bougainvillea

S

These tropical woody vines are evergreen

Hardiness Zones 9 to 11. In colder regions, however, they can be grown as annuals in hanging baskets or planters. The plant simply need enough space to spread out as they produce vines up to 40-feet-long. For containers, there are dwarf varieties 3- to 6-feet long.

Pronounced “boo-gun-VILL-ee-uh,” *Bougainvillea glabra* and *Bougainvillea spectabilis* are the two most common species grown ornamenteally in the U.S. A tropical woody vine, this woody climber is usually spread its vines off the ground on a wall or trellis, but also it can be pruned as a shrub or it can be grown as a shrub, planted in rows as a hedge. The west side of a garage or house, a full-sun patio or deck, or next to the hot driveway are all perfect spots for this climbing vine.

Fast-growing and lush, they have been a common landscaping plant throughout the warmer areas at resorts and cottages, creating that tropical vibe of vegetation and color. Heat and sun lovers,

~~bougainvilles are perfect for adding color~~

Interesting, their colorful displays are not actual flowers but modified leaves called bracts, much like a poinsettia. Three to six bracts surround the actual flowers, which are small, tubular, usually white, and found in groups of three. They're often pink but also comes in shades of red, magenta, orange, yellow, and even white.

ADVERTISEMENT

Bougainvilleas may flower almost year-round when planted outside in their native warm climates. Those moved indoors for the winter may eventually stop flowering due to lack of light but will resume

Check these tips if your bougainvillea
won't bloom.

Read Next

- [Growing Oleander: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow and Care for Plumbago Plants](#)
- [How to Grow Mock Orange: The Complete Guide](#)

PLANTING

Bougainvilleas like sunlight and lots of it. This plant also likes it dry so the planting location must drain well. Overwatering can actually inhibit blooming. Bougainvillea are not picky about soil pH.

Bougainvilleas have long, narrow thorns used to climb, so avoid planting bougainvillea in places where the vines and pedestrians or small children might tangle. Wear thick leather gloves and handle them with care.



them the room they need to grow.



When to Plant Bougainvilleas

Plant in spring, well after all danger of frost has past. Anything below about 30°F will likely cause damage or even kill it. If you are planting it in a garden bed, spring planting will let it settle in before the high summer heat.

Remember: If you live in USDA zone 8 or cooler, you'll need to grow bougainvillea in a container. Place outside in spring well after the last spring frost. You'll need to bring inside for the winter so chose a container than can be moved come fall.

How to Plant Bougainvilleas

- Bring your bougainvillea home and water it well while still in the container.
Not only will the plant get a drink, but it'll be easier to remove it.
- Take care when removing them from their original container. The roots are thin and easily damaged. Transfer it straight from the nursery pot to its final home.
- To plant in the ground, dig a hole about 12-inches deep. Mix in compost. Set the plant at the same depth as it was in its original container. After planting, add an inch or two of organic mulch, such as pine straw, keeping it away from the plant stems to avoid rot.



Container Planting

Bougainvilleas planted in containers should have an excellent draining potting mix that won't hold on to water very long. Try using potting soil intended for palms or cacti.

Terra cotta is an excellent material for bougainvillea pots as it dries more quickly than plastic pots, helping to keep the soil from remaining too damp for this arid-loving vine.

ADVERTISEMENT

GROWING

Besides a sunny spot with good drainage, your bougainvillea won't need much else from you to cover itself with bright blooms every year. Note that the very first season may not produce many blooms, but then watch out from season two onwards.

- In the first growing season, water only to keep the soil slightly moist but not saturated. Once established, water deeply every three weeks or so; this plant would rather get a few long drinks than many short ones.
- Each spring, apply an inch or two of compost (or a granular fertilizer) to the soil under the plant to keep up flowering, but no more than that as excess nitrogen causes more leaf growth than bloom.
- If your bougainvillea isn't blooming, it could be either a lack of sunlight or

- While able to climb up fences and arbors, or anything else, bougainvillea vines don't have tendrils. You'll need to help it and use soft but strong plant ties or strips of fabric to train the vine.

Pruning Bougainvillea

- Prune bougainvillea in the late fall or very early spring or when blooming is done. If you don't prune, the vines will become unruly.
- Remove any rambling vines that have strayed too far. The plant will flower on new growth after it comes out of dormancy, so fall pruning eliminates removing future blooms.
- Remove dead or weak vines at any time of the year.
- Remember the thorns! Wear tough gloves.

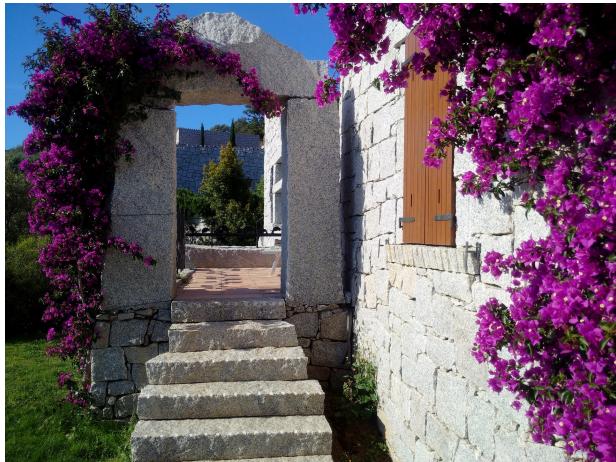
Container Planting

- Bougainvilleas in containers may be fertilized twice per month during the growing season with a diluted general-purpose fertilizer when watering

ter if you live in an area where

it freezes.

- Overwinter your bougainvillea in a sunny window, and keep it occasionally watered. It's okay to prune it back before bringing it inside.
- In spring, gradually reintroduce it to the outdoors, provide some fertilizer, and re-attach it to whatever structure you'd like it to climb, or treat it as a containerized shrub.



Types

- 'James Walker' will bloom nearly year-round in areas that don't receive a frost. Blooms are pink-purple. Hardy to zone 10 to 11.
- 'California Gold' is one of the most reliable yellow bougainvilleas.
- 'Sundown Orange' is hugely popular

- ‘Barbara Karst’ is a red stunner that can get huge, with vines climbing as high as 40 feet.
- ‘Helen Johnson’ and ‘Pixie’ are dwarf varieties that will take on more of a shrub shape. They can be maintained under three feet tall and are sometimes trained as bonsai.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Bougainvilleas are essentially pest-free and disease-free. Just remember to avoid

neighboring plants and can be controlled with insecticidal soap.

- [Aphids](#)
- [Scale insects](#)
- [Spider mites](#)
- [Bacterial leaf spot](#)
- [Leaf miners](#)

VINES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture.

[Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

MORE LIKE THIS



[Growing](#)



[How to Grow](#)



[How to Grow](#)

Complete Guide



How To Grow Mandevilla Vines: The Complete Guide

Plumbago Plants

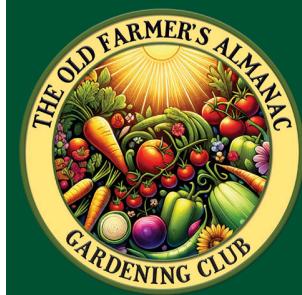


How To Grow a Banana Plant in a Container

The Complete Guide



How to Grow Star Jasmine: The Complete Plant Guide



GROW YOUR BEST GARDEN YET

Join The Old Farmer's Almanac
Gardening Club Today!

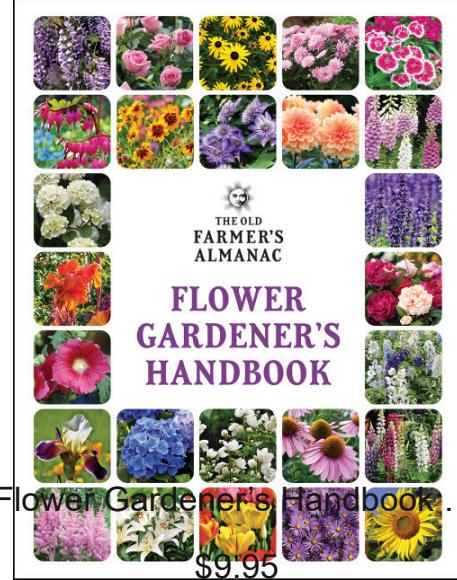
LEARN MORE

COMMENTS

[ADD A COMMENT](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

THE OLD FARMER'S STORE



Flower Gardener's Handbook
\$9.95

[BUY NOW](#)

Moon Phase Wildflower Seed ...

\$9.95

[BUY NOW](#)



Moon Phase Spring Pollinator...

\$9.95

[BUY NOW](#)

9 Herb Window Garden Kit

\$39.95

[BUY NOW](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Our Brands

[The Old Farmer's](#)[Almanac for Kids](#)[Yankee Magazine](#)[Family Tree Magazine](#)[NH Business Review](#)[New Hampshire](#)

Resources

[About Us](#)[Contact Us](#)[Free Daily Newsletter](#)[Webcam](#)[Advertise with Us](#)[Media Relations](#)

Connect with Us



[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie List](#)

[Do Not Sell or Share](#)

[My Personal](#)

[Information](#)

©2025 [Yankee Publishing Inc.](#), An Employee-Owned Company

1121 Main Street | P.O. Box 520 | Dublin, NH 03444