

SPRUCE UP YOUR GARDEN'S APPEARANCE WITH CLIMBING VINES

Gardeners are always looking for new plants to add to the scenery! No matter how many beds you have planted, there's always room for one more. Maybe you're tired of that bed of marigolds you plant next to the kitchen every year. The rose bushes in front of the porch are lovely, but you want to build on the look. Sooner or later, the garden appears to be full. That's when you can use climbing vines to grow upwards, adding a lush, flourishing dimension to your garden. Here are some ideas on how to use climbing vines to add beauty, drama and functionality to your present garden plan.

If you're not sure of how a climbing vine will fill out a space, try an annual before going to the expense of a permanent, perennial garden climber. Let's use the example of the porch graced with a bed of rose bushes. Your porch posts are perfect supports for a climbing vine. Try planting the easy-to-grow morning glory in clumps around each post. You can start them in peat pots early and plant them directly, pot and all, when they're a few inches tall. Morning glories grow quickly and bloom prolifically. These climbing vines are easily trained up the posts and across the porch railing. By early July, you'll have a bountiful display of flowers that simulates a similar perennial vine display.

You may decide you prefer the annual. While the shade the summer vine offers is welcome in summer, you may want to let the light shine in during winter. When the plant is spent in fall, you can tear it out. You can simply plant another annual come spring.

On the other hand, if you like the dimension the climbing vine adds to this spot, there are perennial climbers that fill the bill. The white or purple passion vine, clematis, is an exotic and lovely companion for the roses. Consider also the climbing roses. There are varieties that bloom abundantly throughout the summer. Winter is the time to check your plant catalogs for permanent candidates for this spot.

Gazebos are made prettier with the addition of climbing vines. Flowering vines, winding their way around the supports and trained along the roof line provide a romantic setting for a candlelight dinner party or a 'Secret Garden' effect for kids playing inside. Jasmine works well in this garden situation. It's evergreen and flowers profusely in summer, with a sweet perfume scent.

Come early spring, fences can look bleak. Sweet peas can be planted along a fence in late winter and be producing a thick and cheerful covering of multi-colored flowers by spring. Sweet peas are somewhat invasive climbing vines, perfect for covering a bare hillside area prone to erosion.

Arbors, deck and carport covers are other places where climbing vines can enhance your garden plan. If you just look around your property, you're sure to find a few places for the lovely climbing vines.