

Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

FACT SHEET



Have Gardening Questions? The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).

Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: mghelpline@masshort.org.

Ornamental Vines

One of the easiest ways to add height, drama and beauty to your garden space is to grow ornamental vines. Vines liven up fences, walls and pergolas. They provide screening for privacy or to hide unwanted views. Grown through shrubs or small trees, or even as a ground cover, vines add color and interest to an expanse of green. Grown on trellises, obelisks and pillars, vines will stand out as living garden art. When planted in the right place, an ornamental vine can certainly be a WOW in your garden. The trick is to make sure you match the vine, and its vigor and height, to your location.

Use more delicate vines such as climbing black-eyed susan (*Thunbergia*) with its sweetly captivating blossoms, or the dramatic Clematis 'Elsa Spaeth' to add punch of color to a short trellis or other small garden space. Lacy Love-in-a-puff (*Cardiospermum halicacabum*) and fragrant sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) are easily trained to grow through shrubs. Try them through a smoke bush (*cotinus*) or witch hazels (*Hammemelis*) as the open structure of these shrubs show off the vine to great effect. Use more vigorous vines such as shade-loving climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea petiolaris*) or the stunning golden hops (*Humulus lupulus* 'Aurea') to grow into trees or cover a large wall.

Vines to use cautiously are five leaf akebia (*akebia quinata*), trumpet vine (*campsis radicans*), English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), wisteria (*wisteria floribunda*), and silver lace vine (*polygonum aubertii*). These vines quickly outgrow their space and may try to take over the whole garden. Some vines, such as porcelain berry (*ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), oriental bittersweet

(*celastrus orbiculatus*), and Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) are on the Massachusetts Invasive plant list and should not be planted and should be removed from your property if currently growing there. Substitute the native American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*), with well behaved and deer resistant native *Wisteria frutescens*, and more gracious honeysuckles like *Lonicera*' Major Wheeler' with its season-long red blossoms, or 'Harlequin' that sports lovely variegated foliage.

Purple hyacinth bean (*Dolchios labalab purpurea*) is a great option for filling a large space. It is an annual grown from inexpensive seed that will leaf out quickly and flower profusely right up until a hard frost with the added bonus of edible, electric purple seed pods. This plant is a standout in any garden. Other annual vines that grow quickly from seed and provide season long beauty are nasturtiums, scarlett runner bean, climbing snapdragon (*Asarina*) and many passionflower varieties.

For lightly shady areas, plant the hardy kiwi, *Actinidia Kolomikta*, whose stunning tri-color foliage will brighten any corner, or climbing bleeding heart (*Dicentra scandens*), an annual that will even grow well in containers.

Remember most perennial vines require patience. First year they sleep, second year they creep, third year they leap. During the first few seasons when your new perennial vine is "sleeping" and establishing its root system, you can safely plant an annual vine in the same spot to provide color and beauty until the "leaping" begins.

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>