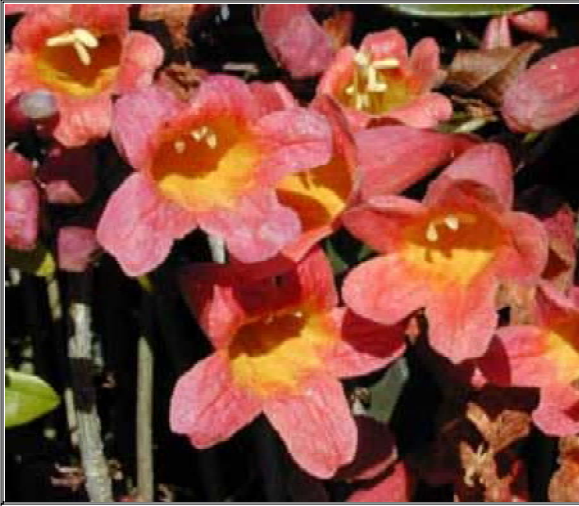


Crossvine is a Good Native Vine for the Landscape

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Thursday, July 18, 2002.



There is renewed interest in ornamental vines for the landscape. Fifty years ago almost every southern home sported vines climbing the porch or on an arbor.

Someone recently asked me to recommend a vine for their yard. After a discussion it became obvious that this situation called for a species of vine that would be controllable. Aside from flowering, leaf characteristics and other features, a vine must stay in scale with the surroundings. We have all heard about the effects of overly aggressive vines such as Chinese wisteria and kudzu.

The first that came to mind was the little known cross vine. This is a wonderful native that rarely gets out of hand. Botanically, it is *Bignonia capreolata*. This is a woody evergreen vine that will grab and hold onto any but the smoothest surfaces. The tendrils produce adhesive discs at their tips and climbing is achieved by both twining and clinging by these small discs.

Though the opposite leaf arrangement is so distinctive that cross vine can be identified at a distance, the flowers are its main feature. They are large and showy, occurring during early spring. The flower color ranges from orange to reddish-orange.

I was fishing the first time that this vine caught my attention * and it takes a lot to get my attention while fishing. This particular vine stretched across a small body of water by growing on some low hanging tree branches. There were trees in the background and its reflection was in the water. Indescribable is the word. Where's the camera? At home of course!

As interest in vines continues we will see this and other natives become more readily available on the market. Some beautiful named cultivars are already available: 'Tangerine Beauty' (orange red), 'Atrosanguinea' (red), and 'Jekyll' (orange with yellow throat).

Cross vine will grow under a wide range of conditions. Though it prefers full sun, it grows well in partial shade or filtered sunlight. It is found growing naturally in diverse habitats from uplands to lowlands. Given a choice it would probably perform best in a moist location however.

Question of the Week: I have many tomatoes on my plants but fear that they will rot due to the rains that we are receiving. What should I do?

Answer: Regular applications of an approved tomato fungicide will help to protect them. Avoid handling plants or picking when the foliage is wet. This can spread rot and blight

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diseases. Also, consider picking them as soon as they start turning pink and allow them to finish ripening indoors. The eating quality will not be reduced significantly if they are picked in this stage.

Note: Don't place those that are pink in the refrigerator. Wait until they are fully ripe if they must be refrigerated. The development of flavor ceases once they are chilled.

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Photo by Gary Knox, UF-IFAS Extension: crossvine 'Tangerine Beauty'

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