

Many Reasons to Plant Vines



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Spanish flag (Mina lobata) is an annual vine that can add summer color to the landscape.

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There are almost as many reasons for planting vines in your landscape as there are types of vines that thrive in our area. Vines can provide screening from undesirable views as well as screening for privacy or shade. Vines can be used to soften hardscape elements in the landscape like walls and fences. They can be used to add color to the landscape, with flowers which range from subtle blue to brilliant orange. Many vines bloom from spring through fall. Most prefer a sunny spot but some can tolerate some shade. Many attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Vines can even be used to provide shade when grown on an overhead arbor or pergola.

Fall and winter are generally the best times to plant perennial vines. This allows them to become established before the stress of hot temperatures. Vines should be planted in a hole that is two to three times the width of the diameter of the rootball of the plant. But set the rootball no deeper in the hole than it grew in the container. It is actually best to even set it a half-inch or so higher.

The new plants should be watered frequently at first, every day or two for the first two weeks, then two to three times per week until they are established. Establishment of new plants often takes a year or more. Once plants are well-established they will only need water during dry periods.

Young vines which haven't grown much or that have pale leaves may benefit from a little fertilizer periodically. But, in many cases it is not necessary to fertilize established vines. Fertilizing may cause excessive growth which requires frequent pruning. Prune flowering vines after they bloom to avoid removing next year's buds. Keep in mind that most vines prefer a slightly acidic soil, which is usually what we have in this area.

There are several things to consider when choosing a vine. Is the location sunny or shady? What are the water requirements of the vine? Will the vine require support like a trellis? What color would look best in your yard? Do you want an annual or a perennial vine? You may want to choose an annual vine to avoid damage to a fence or a wall because of dampness and lack of sunlight. An annual variety also allows you to vary the landscape from year to year.

If you are interested in a native perennial vine, good choices include yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*), trumpet creeper (*Campis radicans*), and climbing hydrangea (*Decumaria barbara*).

Some good non-native perennial vines are butterfly vine (*Mascagnia macroptera*), five-leaf akebia (*Akebia quinata*), painted trumpet vine (*Clytostoma callistegioides*), St. Johns creeper (*Podranea ricasoliana*), confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), and sky vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*). Some non-native vines that can be planted here as flowering annuals include allamanda, bougainvillea, mandevilla, black-eyed Susan vine (*Thunbergia alata*), firecracker vine (*Manettia luteorubra*), and Spanish flag (*Mina lobata*). Some of these that we normally consider as annuals may even return the following year, if you're patient enough.

Vines that do not flower but that provide beautiful year-round foliage are bush ivy (*Fatshedera lizei*), creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*), and Algerian ivy (*Hedera canariensis*). They do well in a shaded part of the landscape.

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