

VINES (Published 3/30/2024)

By Teresa Gaffner, Master Gardener

Late March and April are beautiful months in the Tri-Cities. Spring is here and my neighborhood is a frenzy of every pastel shade you can imagine. There is also that wonderful feeling you get when the weather and the soil finally warm up and it's time to put all those winter plans to work. Do any of your garden designs include flowering vines? Some gardeners hesitate to grow vines because they consider them hard to control and worry about them overtaking their landscaping. Learn some basics about vine selection, proper placement, and maintenance to ensure your success.

First, determine your zip code's hardiness planting zone. This is an average of your area's minimum annual temperature. You will need to know this if you want to plant perennials, which are plants that return every year. Use the following link from the USDA to find yours.

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

Next, find out how much sun your proposed planting site gets. A plant that requires full sun will need a minimum of 6 hours per day. Sun loving vines denied their light requirements will survive but not thrive. You will get less fruit and fewer flowers than expected. Full shade means no direct sunlight at all. Light or partial shade means a mix of sun and dappled shade during the day.

Most container vines from your local nursery can be planted throughout the growing season. After selecting the planting site, dig a hole that is at least twice as wide as the vine's container and the same depth as the plant in the container. Gently remove the plant from the pot and lightly loosen the roots. Place into the hole at the same height as it was in the container and backfill with the soil you had previously removed. After watering, top off the area with an inch or two of compost or other organic matter.

Your vines should be fertilized twice during the growing season, once when they are a foot tall and again when they start to bud. Use a balanced slow-release fertilizer which means that the letters of N-P-K have equal numbers listed after them. If you pick a fertilizer that has a high nitrogen number, you will grow lush green foliage but fewer flowers. Water your vines as needed until well established. Wilted leaves are a sure sign they need watering. If you decide to grow a vine in a container check often to ensure that the soil has not dried out.

Pruning is necessary to keep vines at their best. It can be a daunting chore if the plants are left to grow unchecked. You can cut down on labor if you start training your vines early. Pinching off the stem tips will encourage branching for a fuller look. Always remove damaged, weak, and dead stems.

Your vine will need some type of support to grow on unless you want to use it as ground cover. Grow your vines up a trellis, an arbor or along a fence. You can even use heavy string or wires to support vines. Use soft ties to help keep them attached.

Some flowering vines recommended for the Tri-cities area are clematis, such as *Clematis virginiana* (avoid Sweet Autumn Clematis which is considered invasive), morning glory, ornamental kiwi (*Actinidia kolomikta*, which has tri-colored leaves of green, pink, and cream), coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) and climbing hydrangeas. Check Tennessee's Invasive Plants List at <https://www.tnipc.org/invasive-plants/> to be sure you avoid invasive vines which nurseries sell. Visit your local nursery for some inspiration.

If you are interested in growing native plants, this link from University of Tennessee Gardens has a list of flowering vines recommended for our area.

<https://tnyards.utk.edu/category/native-plants/vines/page/3/>.

Here is a basic primer on vines from the University of Illinois

<https://extension.illinois.edu/flowers/vines>

FREE Presentation

Jessica Zander, a garden coach and consultant, will present a Zoom program entitled "Spring Cleanup and Amending the Soil."

April 1, 2024 6:30 PM EST

Register at:

https://tennessee.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcufuGvrDkiGNK9GKs6nIZJj_QIuqRMSXAx

FREE Presentation

Dr. Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He is a leader in native plant horticulture. He will present "Learn more about nature gardening".

May 6, 2024, 6:30pm EST

Register at:

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0uc-qspz0pHdSx0-0v-Xfo3sSWPDiT7hnx>

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question.

Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.