

Weekly Column for this week: 3-1-10
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Growing Vines

Spring planning continues this week with a focus on vines for the landscape. Vines can be planted to grow along walls, around posts or along a fence or trellis. They can add wonderful color and interest to your yard. They can also be used on a porch or patio to add privacy and beauty. Although they can inspire many possibilities, vines should be properly maintained so they do not spread to unwanted areas or become larger than desired.

Some vines climb by winding their stems around any type of support. They are called twining vines and examples are the bittersweet and wisteria. Other vines use thread-like stems called tendrils that will wrap around a support. Examples of this type of vine are grapes, peas, and cucumbers. And there are yet other vines that use small aerial roots that attach to rough surfaces such as mortar, wood, and tree trunks. Examples of this type of vine include English ivy and wintercreeper euonymus. The Boston Ivy and Virginia creeper are vines that actually climb with disk-like suctioning structures.

When it comes to supports for twining or tendril vines, wires, trellis, or arbors can do the job. Vines that cling by suction or aerial roots can be grown on either a brick or stone wall. It is not advisable to grow these vines on walls made of wood because moisture buildup can cause wood decay. Supporting structures can be metal or wood. Copper and aluminum are two types of metal that resist rust. Redwood, cedar, and cypress are good choices for wood structures because they are rot-resistant.

For more information on vines, including a list of annual and perennial vines, you can visit the web at <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-21.pdf>. Here you will also find descriptions of the vines including the colors of the flowers they produce. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office for more information.