Friday’s Feature
By
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Versatile vines

Flowering vines provide color, fragrance and interest to the landscape. Vines are plants that grow horizontally over the ground or climb by twining or attaching appendages to a support. Indeed, no other group of plants can provide the same effects as vines.

Vines serve several functions in the landscape. Flowering vines can be used as an effective cover up for any unattractive elements, such as rusty sheds or tree stumps. Vines can be planted on an arbor to provide shade over a patio. Vines can be trained on a fence to decorate an otherwise boring view.

Many vines thrive in Florida’s mild climate including several natives and some that are butterfly host plants. For more information on vines, read the University of Florida/IFAS publication “Flowering Vines for Florida”, online at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg097.

Carolina jessamine
Carolina jessamine, a Florida native, grows in hammocks and swamps from eastern Virginia to as far south as Highlands County, Florida just north of Lake Okeechobee.

A popular evergreen vine, it is a medium to fast grower that can reach about 20 feet high and 20 feet wide. It attaches to a support by twining. Twining vines climb by encircling upright vertical supports. Many will spiral in only one direction. If you attempt to train them to spiral in the opposite direction, most will not cooperate and the vine may be damaged.

Bright yellow, tubular flowers appear in late winter or early spring.

It grows and flowers best in full sun but can tolerate partial shade. In either light condition, its foliage is not very dense and therefore is not really an effective screen.

Insects or diseases rarely trouble Carolina jessamine. However, all parts of this plant are toxic. The sap may
cause skin irritation in sensitive individuals. This should be considered when choosing a location for installing Carolina jessamine.

**Cross vine**
Cross vine is known scientifically as *Bignonia capreolata*. It derives its name from the stem which, when cut transversely, shows a 4-parted or cross-like arrangement.

This Florida native grows well in zones 8 to 10. It is a strong growing plant that climbs to great heights by means of branched, disc-bearing tendrils. These small disks allow the plant to cement itself to wood and masonry structures.

Cross vine will flourish under a wide variety of conditions, and spread by root sprouting if not managed.

The showy flowers appear in late winter and early spring. They are trumpet-shaped, reddish-orange, and two to three inches long, making this one of the first flowers to greet returning hummingbirds in early spring.

Several cultivars exist. ‘Tangerine Beauty’ is a prolific bloomer in spring and will flower sporadically into summer. ‘Atrosanguinea’ flowers dark red-purple. ‘Shalimar Red’ is a fast growing red form.

**Passion vine**
Several species of passion vine are grown in Florida. This is a perennial vine, dying back in the winter to re-emerge in the spring. It’s most distinguishing characteristic is the exotic, almost surreal-looking flower.

The gorgeous, three to five-inch flowers come in shades of lavender or purple, with a wavy fringe over five petals. The middle of the bloom looks like a helipad, with a tiny yellow bean-like pollen sac suspended overhead. Each flower lasts about a day during the summer and early fall. The ovoid, green fruit is edible, if not very tasty.

The gulf fritillary butterfly will flock to this plant, and visitors to your garden
will want to know where they can get one.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

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