

Climbing Higher Heights

Using vines in the garden

Story and photos by Andrea Wilson Mueller

A long curved path at the Atlanta Botanical Garden creates shade for visitors with these great climbers. ↓





A close-up of black-eyed Susan and purple sweet potato vines (both are annuals).

An improved variety of native honeysuckle has a beautiful coral, dark pink and orange color. ↓

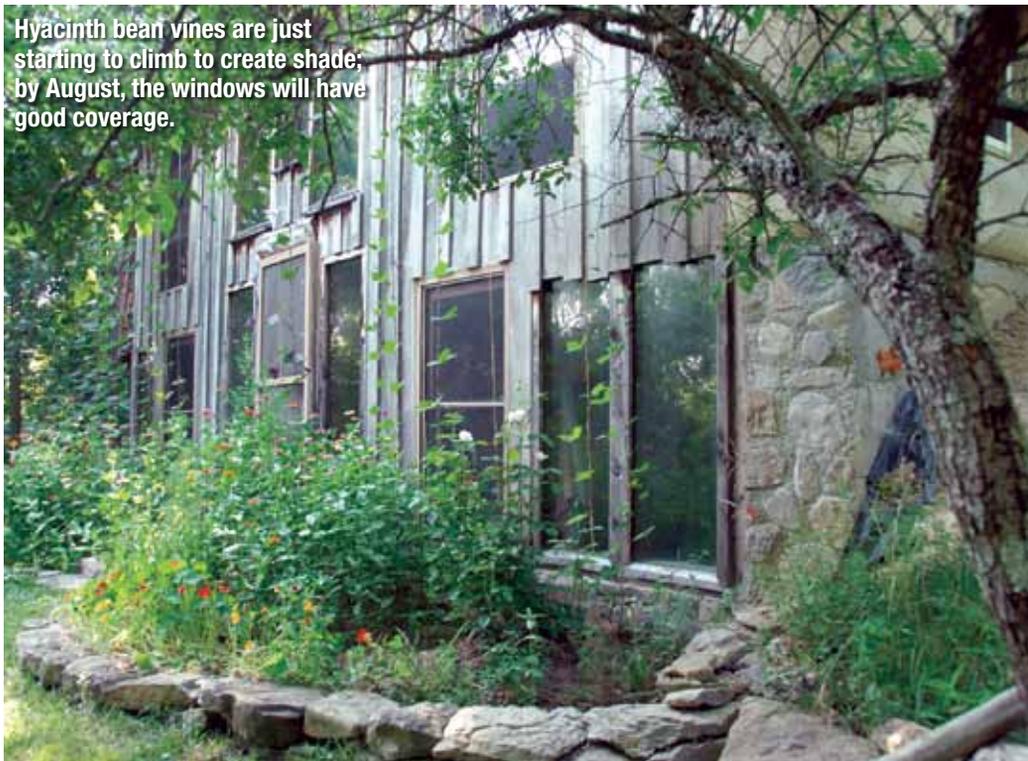


Vines were once the roses on your grandmother’s arbor or the clematis on the mailbox, but there are a variety of vines for all kinds of projects these days. With some creativity, you can add interest to your garden with vines. In a typical garden setting, you may find vines on arbors or pergolas, or maybe even a front porch column. To spice things up a bit, use hardy kiwi, or stick with old-fashioned favorites that never go out of style such as American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*, not invasive Asian varieties that can rip your structures apart), yellow or white climbing roses, or a combination of vines. Other, more unique species include fiveleaf akebia with interesting foliage, and golden hop vine known for its yellow foliage and especially attractive flower.

Screening is another beneficial use for privacy on your front porch or back patio. If you have a deck or porch, you can plant any kind of annual or perennial climber in a long rectangular container and attach strings to a secure place to let the vines grow up, providing a natural screen. Voila – now the neighbors aren’t peering into your party!

Creepers and climbers breathe life to bare walls of concrete, stucco, brick and other building materials if provided with a trellis or some structure to grow on. You can use just about anything to create a trellis or structure, even old fencing with every other plank removed. Rummage through old metal parts or other “junk” to find and create a truly special home for your twisty climber friends. With

Hyacinth bean vines are just starting to climb to create shade; by August, the windows will have good coverage.



Always remember, vines don't just grow up!

You can use vines to cascade beautifully down that ugly concrete wall or boring chain-link fence in the backyard, too.

At the Atlanta Botanical Garden, vines grow over a walkway structure from oversized containers. →

A quick trellis is made of these old fence panels by knocking out every other board. ↓



the right tools you can create a vine house appearing to be completely made of plants and climbers.

Well-placed vines in front of a south-facing window can provide shade; just attach string to your soffit or another secure place. Annual vines will also do the trick – quick-growing purple hyacinth bean can be used to create a nice barrier between the sun and the house. By the end of the summer season when the temperatures are blazing, you will have full coverage and quite a view from the inside as well. This is probably one of the best functional uses for vines because it will reduce your home energy costs.

Edible vines such as grapes, hardy kiwi and squash are also a purposeful way to work climbers into your garden. Any edible vine can be grown as part of your garden. Gourds grown over pergolas can become living art as they dangle above your head if manipulated into desired shapes.





↑ Go green with vines – here purple hyacinth bean vine (annual) climbs to shade the south-facing windows of this home. This could also be done with a perennial vine to provide shade year after year.

Black-eyed Susan vine and purple sweet potato vine grow on chicken wire to help shade the hens near this chicken run and coop. →



Native Vines of Kentucky

- Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
- Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*)
- Purple passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*)
- American, Texas or Kentucky wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*)

Other Vines for Kentucky

- Clematis ('Betty Corning', 'Cardinal', 'Ernest Markham', 'Gypsy', 'Henry', 'Huldine', 'Jackmanii', 'Lincoln Star', 'Nelly Moser', 'Pink Chiffon', 'Ramona' and many more!)
- Fiveleaf akebia
- Hardy kiwi
- Ornamental kiwi (female)
- Climbing hydrangea
- Variegated Virginia creeper
- Climbing rose
- Oriental bittersweet
- Golden hop vine
- Grapes (many varieties!)

Animals and children will appreciate a properly placed vine for shade, too. An imaginative, child-sized half-circle arbor grown as a tunnel would make a super fun play space. Dogs, cats and all animals appreciate shade on a hot summer day as well. On our chicken run we placed black-eyed Susan vine and purple sweet potato vine to climb up the chicken wire. The hens love the shade it provided throughout the day and we loved the beauty from the kitchen window.

Always remember, vines don't just grow up! You can use vines to cascade beautifully down that ugly concrete wall or boring chain-link fence in the backyard, too. Creeping Jenny, sweet potato vines, clematis, native honeysuckle, akebia and any creeper will do the job for these sterile spots. Window boxes with vines are particularly attractive once the vines start to hang down, especially if from a second or third story.

Several vines have been previously mentioned, but the sidebar contains a list of many great perennial edible, ornamental and other vines to use in Kentucky. Vines have so many productive uses and eye-pleasing solutions in your garden, so give them a try this season! ♡

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