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Climbing Plant Specialists

Climbing Plants

Climbers are versatile plants that can often serve the same purpose as shrubs, while using less space. If you have a small garden, climbers can be used to hide walls, or fence off boundaries, without spreading into the limited space of the garden. Climbers can also be used to provide shelter or shade by enclosing structures, such as shade houses, pergolas and arbours. They are also a cheap and easy way to cover up something unsightly, such as a shed or water tank, or to soften a harsh wall, fence or tree trunk. Many have very attractive flowers or foliage.

The only major problems are that, if left uncontrolled, some rampant climbers can block drain pipes or gutters on buildings, while some can do serious damage to the structure (or tree) they are clinging to. Some climbers cause less damage than others, but no matter what you use, you should check for damage every few years, and trim back the climber if need be. If you are worried about climbers causing damage, ones to avoid are those such as Hedera (ivy) and Ficus pumila which cling to even smooth surfaces such as a concrete wall, and can eventually grow into small cracks in the wall then expand enlarging those cracks.

Most climbers need something to climb on. You can use materials such as trellis, wire mesh, single wires or nylon strings (not jute -that will rot).

These can be readily attached to:

***A fence or wall.**

A climber on a wall will create a softer appearance and help reduce temperature extremes (eg: keeping the garden cooler on a hot day).

***The supports or roof of a pergola, arbour or archway.**

***Between two posts.**

***A frame made of galvanised water pipe, or similar material.**

Climbers can also be allowed to climb other plants, or even to scramble over rocks, tree stumps or logs.

SCENTED CLIMBERS FOR WARM CLIMATES (Mild Temperate or Sub Tropic)

Hoya:

Hoyas are twining and root clinging climbers with fleshy leaves and clusters of generally long lasting, waxy petalled, star-like flowers. They grow in temperate to tropical conditions but can be grown in protected positions, such as on a verandah in cooler areas. Well drained organic soils are preferred. Try *H. australis*, *H. bella*, *H. carnosa*.

Jasmine:

Mostly tropical climbers, some are hardy in cooler areas. They generally have a typical primrose type flower consisting of a slender tube and 5 or 6 flat spreading lobes followed by a black berry like fruit. Most soils are suitable in a sunny or partially shaded position.

Jasminum azoricum -scrambling semi-twining plant with glossy evergreen leaves and white flowers in summer that are flushed pink in bud.

Jasminum nitidum -a scrambling semi-climber to 3 metres high with glossy green leaves with white flowers that are purplish-red in bud.

Jasminum polyanthum -moderately vigorous climber to 8 metres with pinnate leaves and white strongly scented flowers with pinkish buds in spring to summer.

Jasminum officinale -similar to *Jasminum polyanthum* but hardier and with flowers not as strongly scented or pink budded.

Honeysuckle:

The genus *Lonicera* includes several scented semi-climbers and climbers, some evergreen some deciduous. They have clusters of tubular flowers generally yellow to green to reddish in colour most commonly borne in spring to summer. They prefer fertile moist soils in sheltered positions, though some are very hardy growing in full sun.

Lonicera x americana- moderately hardy, vigorous, deciduous climber to 8 metres with prolific purple tinged white to yellow flowers.

Lonicera caprifolium- a very hardy, deciduous creeper to 6 metres with yellow-white flowers.

Lonicera japonica-very hardy, rampant, evergreen climber to 9 metres with white to yellow flowers.

Other scented honeysuckles include: *Lonicera hildebrandia* and *Lonicera periclymenum*.

Mandevillea laxa:

A semi-hardy deciduous twining plant to 5 metres. It flowers from mid-summer to early autumn with small clusters of fragrant white to pink funnel shaped flowers. It prefers light acid soils in sheltered positions.

Sweet Pea:

Lathyrus odoratus is a hardy colourful annual to 2.5 metres that is easy to grow in most well drained soils. Support is required for its tendrils. Grown and flowers in the warmer months in a large variety of colours particularly pinks, reds and whites. Provides a good temporary fast growing cover.

Nasturtium:

Tropaeolum majus is the commonly grown annual nasturtium. It is a hardy rapid climbing plant to 2 metres which makes an attractive, colourful screen. Flowers red to yellow to orange in the warm months. It prefers a well drained sandy soil in a sunny or partially shaded position.

Snail Flower:

Phaseolus caracalla (warm conditions-summer flowering)
moderately hardy twiner to 5 metres. It has trifoliate (3 lobed) leaves and short racemes (flower spikes) of extremely coiled and twisted flowers that lead to its common name. The flowers are generally 4 cm long and creamy white with purple markings at first, with the white later turning orange-yellow.

Stephanotis:

Stephanotis floribunda (warm conditions-long flowering)
Twining plant with white, waxy, trumpet-like flowers borne in late summer. Old plants will generally flower better. Requires a warm, frost-free position. Needs plenty of room to grow, as plants can cover a considerable area.

CLIMBERS FOR COASTAL AREAS (# Requires moderate protection)

Bougainvillea
Hardenbergia comptoniana
Hibbertia scandens
Hoya australis
Ipomea brasiliensis
Jasminum polyanthum #
Lonicera (Honeysuckle)
Lotus bertholeti
Muehlenbeckia adpressa
Pandorea jasminoides#
Sollya heterophylla #

CLIMBERS FOR COTTAGE GARDENS

Climbing plants are traditionally common selections for the cottage garden. In the past they were often grown on the wall of a building, though this is perhaps done less today because of a better understanding of how climbers can damage buildings. Climbers are commonly grown in cottage gardens on trellis, over arches, on freestanding or retaining garden walls or fences, or on pillars or posts. They are a popular way to provide shade over a pergola framework, and whatever way you use them, add a special kind of character to the garden.

Climbers suitable for Cottage Gardens.

Bignonia capreolata (Cross Vine)
Bougainvillea spectabilis (Woolly-leaf Bougainvillea)
Campsis grandiflora (Chinese Trumpet Vine)
Ficus pumila (Climbing Fig)

Hedera helix (English Ivy)
Jasminum officinale (Common Jasmine)
Lonicera species (Honeysuckles)
Manettia bicolor (Brazilian Manettia)
Passiflora species (Passionfruits)

Rosa many forms (Climbing Roses)
Sweet Pea (Lathyrus)

Climbers to Grow on Walls

NOTE: Some varieties need additional support (such as chicken wire or trellis) particularly in their early stages of growth. Campsis (syn. Bignonia)

Cobaea (Cup and saucer plant)

Ficus pumila (Creeping fig)

Jasminum sp.

Lonicera (Honeysuckle)

Mandevillea sp.

Passiflora sp. (Passionfruit)

Pyrostegia

Rosa sp. (Climbing Rose)

Solanum jasminoides (Potato vine)

SCENTED CLIMBERS FOR TEMPERATE CLIMATES

Akebia quinata-a vigorous twining climber that is semi-evergreen in areas with mild winters and deciduous in areas with cold winters. Mature leaves are dark green, young ones flushed purple. Flowers are chocolate to maroon purple in colour in spring which are followed by purplish-grey fruits up to 10cm in length. It will grow up to 12 metres high. Suited to most soils.

Clematis:

Some people find clematis hard to grow. Most require a cool but sunny position. They are generally best against a south or east facing wall. Most flower in spring or summer.

Clematis cirrhosa -Stems to 3m long, yellow-white flowers.

Clematis flammula -can climb 2 to 4m, flowers smell like bitter almonds, flowers are white (there are also varieties with rose colour).

Clematis jouiniana -Yellow white flowers change to blue, climbs to 4m or more.

Clematis macropetala -Varieties available with white, violet, blue and pink flowers.

Clematis montana -Stems up to 5m long, white to pink or blue-white flowers in winter and early spring.

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Climbing Geranium:

The Ivy leaf Geranium, *Pelargonium peltatum*, has long stems which can be used as a trellis climber, or left to trail over the ground or hang from a basket. Flowers are white, pink, red and single or double during spring and summer. It prefers a warm and sunny position with well-drained soil, is drought tolerant, and grows well in most coastal areas with only moderate protection.

Sweet Pea (*Lathyrus*):

Lathyrus odoratus is a hardy colourful annual to 2.5 metres that is easy to grow in most well drained soils. Support is required for its tendrils. Grown and flowers in the warmer months in a large variety of colours particularly pinks, reds and whites. Provides a good temporary fast growing cover.

Wisteria:

Vigorous hardy deciduous climbers with long racemes of very attractive pea- like flowers followed by bean-like seed pods. Their growth may be rapid in early years but they may be slow to flower, especially if grown from seed. They prefer fertile, moist soils in sunny positions.

Wisteria sinensis is the most widely grown wisteria. It reaches up to a height of 20 metres when grown on trees. Individual flowers are up to 2.5cm in diameter and mauve to lilac in colour. Flower spikes can be up to 30cm in length. The flowers appear in early spring at the same time as the new leaves begin to emerge. Seed pods are about 15 cm long and have a velvet feel to them. *W. floribunda* also has fragrant flowers.

CLIMBERS FOR COASTAL AREAS (# Requires moderate protection)

Bougainvillea
Clematis microphylla (NOT ALLOWED IN W.A.)
Hardenbergia comptoniana
Hibbertia scandens
Hoya australis
Ipomea brasiliensis
Jasminum sp. #
Kennedia nigricans #
Kennedia rubicunda #
Lonicera (Honeysuckle)
Muehlenbeckia adpressa
Pandorea jasminoides#
Sollya heterophylla # Vinca major (Perwinkle)
Vitis (Grape)
Wisteria sinensis (Chinese Wisteria)

CLIMBERS TO GROW ON TREES

Actinidia chinensis (Chinese gooseberry)
Akebia ampelopsis
Billardiera scandens
Clematis
Ercilla
Hardenbergia violaceae
Hedera (Ivy)
Pandorea
Parthenocissus
Passiflora sp. (Passionfruits)
Rosa (some)
Vitis
Wisteria