



# GROWING VINES IN THE DESERT

STARNOTE 515  
June 2009

## ***Correct Section & Location Means Success***

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Vines have many uses in desert climates. Some provide bright color in hot areas, others cover bare walls and fences, dress up posts and columns or make nice shady area ground covers. Whatever your reason for selecting vines, it's very important to pick the right vine for the right place. Get a copy of StarNote 001, *Planting Guide*, for complete planting instructions. While many vines need little or no feeding, most will benefit from an application of a complete fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Tree, Shrub & Vine Food* in March, May and September.

### **VINES FOR FULL AFTERNOON OR PART SUN:**

**Banks Rose (*Rosa banksiae*).** Deciduous, nearly thornless vine rapidly cover an area up to 20 x 10 feet. Spring flowering, white or yellow varieties have small, double flowers for about 6 weeks. Makes a great bank cover or train on fence, arbor, column, trellis or wall. Water moderately in summer, deeply and infrequently at other times. Semi-evergreen in mild winter.

**Cat Claw (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*).** Tough, semi-evergreen, heat-loving vine has large, yellow trumpet flowers in spring. Climbs quickly by means of little hooks like cat claws. Excellent on sunny, hot walls or fences. Also does well in part shade. Likes widely spaced watering once established. Cut back after bloom. Snip ends of vines to encourage branching.

**Graber Firethorn *Pyracantha* (*Pyracantha fortuneana* 'Graber')**. Supple, evergreen, limber variety grows to 10 x 10 feet or more. Has fragrant white flowers in spring followed by red or orange berries (birds love them) in winter. Excellent in full sun on trellis, wall or fence. Great, thorny, barrier screen. Drought tolerant when established. Water deeply and infrequently.

**Grape (*Vitis* varieties).** Grown primarily for their fruit, these deciduous vines make attractive landscape plants as well. Good on fence, as wall cover, or train to cover a patio, roof, arbor or entryway. Many types are available including seedless varieties like *Red Flame* and *Thompson*. Vines grow very quickly when given lots of water. The downside to this is reduced fruit production. Give ample water while fruit is growing and water deeply and infrequently otherwise. Feed with *Ammonium Sulfate* (21-0-0) in early spring and use a complete fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Tree, Shrub & Vine Food* every 6-8 weeks thereafter. Watch out for skeletonizing caterpillars and treat with *Bacillus Thuringensis* (BT) as needed.

**Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*).** Versatile, semi-evergreen vine is noted for its fragrant white and yellow flowers spring through fall. Excellent for fence, arbor, wall or trellis; good ground cover on slopes. Give moderate to infrequent water when established. Prune heavily and clean out in spring. Fertilize occasionally to increase flowers production.

**Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans* and hybrids).** Fast growing, deciduous vine has clusters of red-orange, trumpet shaped flowers all summer. Hybrid varieties have salmon-red or yellow blooms. Can cover a 20 x 20 foot area. Excellent choice for hot corners, walls, fences and arbors. Will take ample water, but does very well with deep, infrequent irrigation. Fertilize lightly in spring.

### **VINES BEST IN MORNING OR FILTERED SUN AND AFTERNOON SHADE:**

**Boston Ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*).** Self-attaching, semi-evergreen variety good on post, fence or wall. Forms a dense, flat mat when established; very easy to control. Needs good drainage and regular water. Has brilliantly colored fall foliage.

**Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*).** This bright, pretty, evergreen vine, covered with clusters of small, yellow, trumpet flowers in spring, grows to 20 feet. Excellent cover for trellis, arbor or fence with eastern exposure; great for shady entryways. Likes good drainage; give moderate water in season, deep, infrequent water otherwise. Prune as needed to shape and control.

**Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*).** Large, deciduous vine has fragrant, purple flower clusters in late spring. Grow on fence, wall or arbor. Needs good support to establish correctly. Can be pruned into a shrub or small tree. Give ample water during early growth and blooming period, If older plants fail to bloom, withhold all nitrogen fertilizer for one year. When established, can grow in full sun but looks better with afternoon shade.

**English Ivy (*Hedera helix*).** Dense, tough, evergreen ivy climbs easily on walls and fences; good spot ground cover and filler for small spaces. Other varieties like Hahn's English Ivy and Needlepoint Ivy will also fill the bill. Most ivies do best with regular water and afternoon shade. Keep away from stucco as aerial roots will cause damage.

**Passion Flower (*Passiflora alata*).** Large-leafed, deciduous vine grows to 20 feet or more with large, pinkish lavender flowers all summer. Put in afternoon shade, sheltered from strong winds. Like moderate water in blooming season. May freeze in cold winters, but usually recovers. Mulch base of plant heavily for additional protection. Prune as needed for form and control.

**Silver Lace Vine (*Polygonum aubertii*).** Attractive deciduous vine with masses of white flowers spring through fall grows 12 feet or more in one season. Makes good screen, in morning sun, on fence, arbor or entryway. Very water efficient; water once a week when established. Prune completely to ground to renew; bloom will be delayed until summer.

**Star Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*).** Bright, waxy-leafed, evergreen vine climbs by twining around supports to a height of about 10 feet. Especially good in east and north exposures on fence, trellis or entryway; good sprawling ground cover in semi shade areas. Covered with intensely fragrant white flowers in spring. Generally hardy but may freeze to ground in exceptionally cold winters. Prefers moderate water in spring, deep, infrequent water otherwise. Benefits from occasional fertilizer in spring and fall.

#### **VINES BEST MORNING SUN or in SHADE:**

**Algerian Ivy (*Hedera canariensis*).** Large-leafed, evergreen ivy is an excellent climbing ground cover on north facing walls and under trees. Slow down its extremely vigorous growth by cutting back on fertilizer and water. Use the lighter, variegated variety to brighten darkly shaded areas. Climbs by use of aerial rootlets so watch out for stucco and other porous masonry surfaces.

**Creeping Fig (*Ficus pumila*).** Dainty, evergreen vine starts out slowly then accelerates to cover large areas in a short time. Provides excellent cover in medium to dense shade; looks great on chimneys. Will climb equally well on wood, masonry or metal. Small, delicate leaves become larger and thicker with age. Water moderately in summer, deeply and infrequently otherwise.

**Periwinkle (*Vinca Major*).** Glossy, evergreen vine makes a colorful ground cover in shady areas. Long, trailing stems, topped with lavender blue flowers root as they spread; will climb with support. Best with enriched soil, good drainage and moderate water. Feed regularly with *Dr. Q's® Tree, Shrub & Vine Food*.

**OTHER FLOWERING VINES:** Several other vines are available on a seasonal basis. Some of the varieties most often planted in our area are:

**Bougainvillea**, a tough, brightly colored, sun-loving summer annual in shades of red, purple, pink or orange. **Lilac Vine (*Hardenbergia violacea*)** is covered with lilac flowers in spring. Give it PM shade - - may winter over. **Pink Chinese Jasmine (*Jasminium polyanthum*)**, intensely fragrant, pink flowers in spring, best in shade, frost tender.