Vines for San Antonio Landscapes

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The usual reason for area gardeners to consider vines is to block an unpleasant view. There are, however, other factors to consider when selecting the right vines for your landscape. Many vines provide attractive blooms and wildlife food but some vines are difficult to manage.

One of the most desirable vines is butterfly vine. It is evergreen and aggressive enough for one plant to fill a trellis or 20 feet of 8ft tall fence. It does the job of blocking undesirable views with the added dividend of producing a showy yellow bloom followed by a green butterfly shaped seed pod consistently over the growing season. It is reportedly not eaten by deer and is drought tolerant. Butterfly vine also has some shade tolerance.

Cross vine is another evergreen vine that is in the same league as butterfly vine in terms of drought tolerance and growth rate. The tubular, rust colored flowers cover the plant during March and produce a few blooms throughout the growing season. Cross vine is a good place to look for the first hummingbirds of the spring. Unfortunately deer find cross vine to be a tasty food source. For a more orange- colored bloom select the variety “tangerine beauty”. Grow cross vine in full sun.

Butterfly vine and cross vine are often described as disciplined growers that are effective in blocking undesirable views. I have never heard anyone describe Queen’s crown (also called coral vine) as disciplined. It blocks undesirable views by growing over the top of everything in its path and burying objects in foliage and pink blooms. It is an aggressive, heat-loving vine that makes a great show in mid-summer as it grows over flower beds, fences, old buildings and even trees. Luckily, queen’s crown dies back to the ground every autumn. If you have the right conditions, queen’s crown may meet your needs but be aware of its aggressive growth rate. In addition to being attractive, the blooms are especially desirable to honey bees as a nectar source. Deer may eat coral vine but once it is established it can usually outgrow the feeding.

In the shade Carolina jessamine is often grown against a fence to block views or provide privacy. Carolina jessamine is a leaning plant rather than a classic twining vine like cross vine or butterfly vine. One plant will cover about six feet of a six ft. high fence. Carolina jessamine is evergreen and drought tolerant. The small but showy yellow blooms appear in early spring and are fragrant. Deer do not usually eat jessamine.

Climbing roses can be very effective in blocking an unpleasant view. A plant can grow 20 ft. in each direction and 20 ft. tall with attractive blooms every spring. Because of the tangled growth and thorns, climbing roses not only modify a view but they can block entry to a property. If managed appropriately climbing roses are an effective security border. Management is the issue with climbing roses. They should be pruned every summer after the spring bloom period to remove old wood and errant growing stems. “Old Blush” climbers have an attractive pink bloom and relatively long bloom period. “ New Dawn” is the most common climbing rose. It also has a pink flower. Deer eat climbing roses.