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Passiflora caerulea, right, grows and blooms well against a warm, sunny wall. (Marty Wingate / for the P-I)

NW Gardens: Spent shrubs lend support to showy September vines

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By MARTY WINGATE
SPECIAL TO THE P-I

In September, our gardens have filled up and out, but they are by no means finished. The lush, lazy look of September is perfect for vines with flowers or foliage that extend the garden's seasonal display.

At any time of year, vines add an extra dimension of interest to the garden -- a vertical statement, interesting contrasts of texture against trees and shrubs and, as always, the opportunity to include even more plants in the garden.

Their presence is especially appreciated at this time of year -- the burgundy tones of the ornamental grape *Vitis vinifera* 'Purpurea' take on extra color, and *Clematis* 'Etoile Violette,' in its second flush of flowers, puts on a good show. Wisteria is lovely, but it isn't in full bloom now, so we look for vines that grow well, either with other plants or all alone, and will carry the garden along.

September vines that use shrubs as a support give your garden a second act. Take a spring-blooming shrub such as *Deutzia*, *Weigela* or *Kolkwitzia*. Their show is long over; it was part of that wild spring frenzy, when it seems every plant is in competition to produce the most flowers.

Unless you have planted a variegated *Weigela* ('My Monet') or a purple-leaved variety ('Wine & Roses'), the large, spring-flowering shrubs just seem to take up space in late summer. So put them to good use as a support for a flashy little vine that can make it look as if your *Deutzia* has something new going on.

The best vines to grow on shrubs are the scramblers that flower on wood grown this year. Late-flowering clematis form a large contingent of vines of interest in September. Gone are the big, wide faces of 'Nelly Moser' and 'Asao,' both lovely late-spring flowering selections. The clematis that bloom into September start in July or August and often

don't grow more than 8 to 10 feet.

Scrambling up through two shrubs to get to the topmost, sunniest spot, 'Gravetye Beauty' finally bloomed in our garden this year. 'Gravetye Beauty' is a cultivar of an American native, *Clematis texensis*, which is native to, yup, Texas.

Somehow I finally made it feel at home, and it opened its rosy pink flowers into a lily shape, showing yellow stamen inside. This could be the start of something big.

If I need to prune a branch or two off one of the shrubs this winter, it will be no problem for the clematis. Because 'Gravetye Beauty' blooms on new wood, I can cut it down to two sets of buds and pull this year's stems off their living supports.

At the end of winter, do likewise with other late-flowering clematis -- they are listed as belonging to pruning group three (cut back hard). Pull the remaining twiggy bits out of the shrub, and your combo is ready for a new year.

Tropaeolum tuberosum is a vaguely hardy (Zones 8-10) nasturtium vine, most often seen in the cultivar 'Ken Aslet,' which has tubular scarlet flowers that have a golden mouth. Grow it through a shrub in a warm spot to bring on its flowers in late summer.

Most annual vines are suited for such situations, too. Try your hand at the charming yellow canary creeper *Tropaeolum peregrinum*, which puts out its whiskery flowers over a long season. You can plant out the seeds directly next spring.

The cup-and-saucer, or cathedral, vine (*Cobaea scandens*) is an annual, too, but at 20 feet, it could be too much for your shrub, so try growing it on a horizontal structure. It uses tendrils to hold on, so securing a piece of chicken wire to the top of a fence would give it what it needs, and put its flowers, which appear all through late summer and early fall, at eye level.

Cup-and-saucer vine grows easily from seed planted in early spring. Keep the plants protected until planted out in May.

Although most clematis seem mild-mannered and would work well climbing on a variety of shrubs, there are exceptions. Those most likely to run rampant are the spring-flowering *Clematis armandii* and the fall-flowering *Clematis paniculata*.

Clematis paniculata is known as the sweet autumn clematis for its fragrant flowers. It's an evergreen vine that grows to 20 feet, and you wouldn't want to let it loose on an unsuspecting shrub, so use it to smother a fence, tall stump or garage.

No sloucher in the smothering department, *Clematis tangutica* will grow up to 30 feet and produce its lemon-yellow, bell-shaped flowers summer into autumn. The silky seed heads left behind, so characteristic of clematis, are a good show in themselves.

Some vines, such as those two clematis, grow best on their own structures, not with other plants. This is also true of the rambunctious trumpet vines (*Campsis*), which can grow up to 30 feet.

Campsis radicans is native to central and eastern North America, where it blooms earlier than here. In our region, mid- to late summer is marked by the appearance of clusters of bright orange flowers. Selected cultivars include vines with flowers of golden yellow ('Flava') or deep red ('Balboa Sunset').

Trumpet vines have long, compound leaves and cling by using aerial roots that attach to fences, walls and trellises. Once established, thin the number of branches in winter and secure the remaining branches to the support. Long, whippy branches



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Trumpet vines use aerial roots to attach to fences, walls and trellises. The showy blooms, seen here in a 'Balboa Sunset,' are magnets for hummingbirds. (MONROVIA)

can be shortened. Grow this hummingbird favorite in full sun.

September vines in pots? Oh yes, indeed. But be careful when choosing which vine to use in which pot. A pot that is big enough for the roots may not be big enough for the above-ground growth. Abundant foliage and flowers in addition to whatever support you use can make the entire piece top-heavy and susceptible to toppling over in a gust of wind.

Even in a container, a shrub makes a good vine support. You also can choose a small obelisk or trellis that is proportioned to look good with the pot.

Vines climb in various ways. Clematis twine their leaf stems; nasturtiums wrap their whole stem around; climbing roses do it by catching their downward-facing thorns on a branch and hoisting themselves up.

Trumpet vines cling, as do creeper vines (*Parthenocissus*). The silvervein creeper vine (*Parthenocissus henryana*) clings by attaching its sucker pads to flat surfaces. It grows to 30 feet, so it's a great choice to cover a blank wall and will give you a full three seasons of beauty: the first flush of bronze-red new growth, then leaflets marked with a pewter-colored vein down the middle and finally screaming orange color.

More vines for September beauty include the passionflower. The maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*) and the blue passion flower (*P. caerulea*) both survive here. Bougainvillea, unfortunately, doesn't, but it makes such a flamboyant show of it until well into autumn that you won't mind replacing it for next September's vine display.

Vine support

Find your vine support at local nurseries and specialty garden shops, or go online to these sources:

Rosebar -- rosebar.net; locally made rusted metal obelisks, trellises and arches.

Smith & Hawken -- smithandhawken.com; trellises, arches and more.

Garden Arbor Store -- gardenarborstore.com; wooden, vinyl and metal pieces.

Trellis Structures -- trellisstructures.com; small pieces and large-scale pergolas.

Marty Wingate, a Seattle-based Master Gardener, has a master's degree in urban horticulture and is the author of two garden books. She can be contacted at: martywin@earthlink.net.

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Parthenocissus henryana clings by attaching sucker pads to flat surfaces. (GREAT PLANT PICKS PHOTOS)