DESIGN & DECORATING

A Marriage of True Vines

Climbers can really get a garden off the ground—especially if you bodly intertwine two (or more) varieties for a lush tapestry

BY LINDSEY TAYLOR

FRTICAL GARDENS, like those created by French botanist Patrick Blanc, have inspired countless instances. The frenzy for verdant walls may finally be plateauing as people realize the level of upkeep and money such gardens require. That doesn't mean gardens require still craving verticality. Covering walls, fences and other uptrusting structures like pergolas or tuteurs (tall, conical or pyramidal frames) with plants adds rhythm and interest to a garden—not to mention more growing space, especially welcome in smaller plots.

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The easiest way to become upwardly green is the clever use of vines
and climbers, including twiners like
the passionflower or kiwi vine, whose
tendrils and branches need a support
to wrap themselves around, self-clingers like climbing hydrangea that will
adhere unaided to most vertical surfaces; and ramblers (typically roses)
that just need a little support to
scramble up and over a structure. Each
type has its merits, but the real artistry comes into play when you mix
two or more varrietes.

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Arranging a marriage of vines with similar needs and habits sounds harder than it is. Unlike European gardeners, who view any vertical surface as a blank canvas, Americans seem to venture into the world of climbers with trepidation, often ending up with a single lonely vine straggling across a wall or fence, tentative and unlush. Achieving a rich tapestry of multiple types is just a question of doing your homework and learning how to control the vines.

George Schoellkopf of Hollister

George Schoellkopf of Hollister House, an impressive garden in Washington, Conn., is like a mixologist of plants. A Texas native who's spent years perfecting his ewer-evolving landscape, Mr. Schoellkopf is a fan of climbers and is brilliant at pairing likeminded partners. "Knowing a plant's habits is important," he said. "Bit an aggressive grower or slow and delicate? What growing conditions does it like?" Doing a little research up front to find plants with simpatice needs goes a long way toward ensuring you don't waste money or create an unmanageable mess. Even so, some pruning is often unavoidable. "It's important to find the balance between the wall and the climbing plants," said Mr. Schoellkopf. "You need to control their growth so they don't just take over, especially when you are working with a rapid grower."

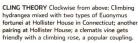
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At Hollister House, Mr. Schoellkopf particularly likes to mix different varieties of the hardy evergreen euonymus, which he calls "God's gift to the north." (Note: In zones 6 and northward, euonymus vime is not the invasive problem it can be in warmer climates.) Favorite types include Euonymus fortunei Variegatus, with its almost white leaves ("It plays a trick on the eye—from a distance it reads as a wall covered in white flowers," he said) and the tiny leafed Euonymus fortunei 'Kewensis.' On the back wall of the house, Mr. Schoellkopf combined Rosa 'Eden,' a climbing rose that's a repeat bloomer, with a mix of three different Euonymus for an inter-

three different Euonymus for an interesting patterning of leaf and flower. The world of vines, of course, is vast and potentially overwhelming. There are vines for shade, for sun, for









foliage alone, for flowers. There are evergreen vines, ones that will cover a structure rapidly and those that take the slow approach. And then there are vines you should beware of due to their aggressively invasive nature: Wisteria and trumpet vine, for instance, can do a number on foundations if planted close to a house, ludzu and Japanese honeysuckle are choking parts of the South.

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If you're too impatient or riskaverse to experiment with untried
mixes, consider the classic combination of climbing-rose and clematis,
a common sight in Europe. Dan Long,
founder of Brushwood Nursery (gardenvines.com) in Athens, Ga, finds the
two combine beautifully, having similar requirements for soil, water and
light. It should be mentioned that Mr.
Long, who's been growing vines for
mail-order sale since 1998, is determined to raise the profile of clematis
in America (where it's often dismissed
as a "mailbox vine").

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A clematis planted at the base of a rose, about a foot away, will weave its way through the rose vines, typically blooming when the rose's own petals have faded. (If your rose is a single bloomer, this really helps keep your vine wall or structure vivid.) It's just a question of taking the idea of choosing plants that will bloom in sequence and applying it vertically.

'Interweaving vines is all about pacing and mixing, knowing your plants and then letting loose a little.'

Louis Bauer, director of horticulture at Wave Hill, a jewel box of a New York City public garden in the Bronx, recommends a related formula: Mixing two (or more) types of clematis with different bloom times. Clematis is often a good choice for nervous gardeners, said Mr. Bauer: "Choosing ones such as Clematis crispa and Clematis viorna that die back to the ground [in northern climes] takes the fear of pruning out of the equation." If your vertical surface is in a shady spot, choose wines that aren't too ravenous for sun. Mr. Long is a fan of the

spot, choose vines that aren't too ravenous for sun. Mr. Long is a fan of the self-clinger Parthenocissus henryana, a less aggressiev, variegated version of Virginia creeper that pairs particularly well with climbing. Japanese hydrangea 'Moonlight' (Schizophragma hydrangeoides). When it comes to a part-shade wall, Mr. Schoellkorf avaire and the state of the commends a climbing hydrangea, but likes to mix it with the variegated kiwi vine (Actinidia kolomikta), whose green leaves develop pink and white tips, for a dense, interesting pairing.

kiwi vine (Actinidia kolomikta), whose green leaves develop pink and white tips, for a dense, interesting pairing. "Height in the garden is important." said Page Dickey, owner of a charming Connecticut garden called Duck Hill. She grows vines "religiously" on everything from low stone walls to pergolas in the vegetable gardens, and has even found a way to work truly impressive height into the mix. by training climbers to wind around the trunks of trees." I grow Japanese hydrangea up some of my shade trees, or a rambling rose up an old apple tree," she said, "so when the tree's flowers fade and before the apples come, you have beautiful blooms. It's all about pacing and mixing, knowing your plants and then letting loose a little."