

WISTERIA

Wisterias are considered to be one of the most beautiful, sought out flowering vines to grow in your garden. With their dangling, delicate flowers in full bloom, you would think your garden is situated in a tropical paradise.

VARIETIES

There are several different varieties of Wisteria. The two most common species are the Japanese (*Wisteria floribunda*) and Chinese (*Wisteria sinensis*). Their differences are only noticed when examined carefully. One difference is the way they twine on a structure. Japanese Wisteria twines in a clockwise direction and Chinese Wisteria twines counterclockwise. Both have extraordinarily beautiful flowers although, varieties of Chinese Wisteria are known to flower at a much younger age and more readily than the Japanese varieties which are known to be stubborn.

LOCATION

Wisteria like full sun and prefers to be planted in deep, well-drained, loamy soil with a slight alkaline (sweet) pH level. The pH scale measures the level of acidity or sweetness of soil on a scale from 1 – 14, 7 being neutral, any number below is acidic and any number above is alkaline. Keep moist during hot and dry spells.

FLOWERING

The most frequently heard comment regarding Wisteria is: "I can't get my Wisteria to flower." This is easily remedied.

1. Young wisterias usually do not flower. It may take up to 5 years before they start to bloom.
2. Lack of sun can prevent blooming. They need bright light for them to produce flowering buds.
3. They are maintained too well. Too much water and fertilizer will make them devote most of their energy to producing leaves and newer growth, instead of flower buds. Once planted it is best to leave the fertility of the soil alone. Allowing Wisterias to be in slight stress will force the vine to produce flowering buds. Also, it is important to try to buy varieties that are grafted and not seed grown as grafted varieties have proven to be earlier bloomers in our climate zone.

PRUNING

Another way to induce flowering, is through pruning techniques. Flowers are produced on spurs at the base of stems. Removal of these will impede flowering potential. This is why it is so essential to prune correctly. Each spring long vertical shoots should be removed to encourage side shoot development. Once horizontal (mature) shoots and branches are fully developed and attached to a structure, all new shoots should be removed in the spring. This encourages flowering spurs to develop at the base of the cut shoots for more flowers the following spring. Any pruning should be done right after flowering.

Wisterias are normally grafted, so if any shoots (suckers) grow from the base of the vine, they should be removed immediately, these unwanted shoots can take over and smother the parent plant.

When Wisterias still have difficulty flowering after all pruning measures have been applied, then they need to be root pruned, which puts the vine under stress. This stress causes the plant to want to reproduce which it does by flowering. In early spring drive a sharp spade into the ground around the base of the vine at least 3' away from the main trunk. Do not overly slash the roots; this may do more harm than good. Be sure not to make slashes straight across the ground. You may sever a large root completely. Slash only a few times haphazardly around the base. This should be enough to cause the vine just enough stress to make it flower.

FERTILIZER

The more rich and fertile the soil is, the more Wisterias will become too lazy or comfortable to flower. Avoid using fertilizers with high levels of nitrogen. Nitrogen causes vegetative growth (foliage) and the vine could become too overwhelming. It is advisable to use a hen transplanting it is advisable to use a transplant fertilizer to help generate roots. Overall, using fertilizers sparingly is advised, but if necessary use a formulation that is high in phosphorous, like Superphosphate 0-20-0. This formulation will aid in flower bud formation without encouraging excessive foliar development.