



trail BLAZERS

Whether *cascading from pergolas* or *concealing boundary walls*, *climbers and creepers* provide a *profusion of colour* in a *spectrum of shades*

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PHOTOGRAPHS ISTOCK

Climbers and creepers are wonderfully versatile,' says Joburg-based landscaper Tim Steyn of Tim Steyn Landscaping. 'If you're looking to add formality, say in a clipped form or an obelisk, they're a fast-growing solution to covering metal structures – far quicker than waiting for a shrub to mature.'

They also make effective layering tools, he adds – whether to green up a perimeter fence, soften columns and pergolas or add a riot of cascading colour to a retaining wall. 'Where planting space is restricted, they provide an excellent alternative to bulky hedges.' From tried-and-tested favourites to some lesser-known gems, try some of these head-turning varieties.

DEEP PINK Bougainvillea

'These hardy, drought-resistant plants thrive on benign neglect,' says Steyn. 'They're available in a huge range of colours and are ideal for north- or west-facing walls.' Bougainvillea prefers sandy soil and the main stems will need to be attached to a structure. Large, thorny varieties are excellent for perimeter screening.

Mexican blood trumpet (*Distictis buccinatoria*)

A retro favourite, this exuberant Mexican native will be familiar to anyone over 35. An evergreen climber, it features bold, tubular flowers that create a spectacle from summer to autumn. The ultimate pergola plant, it favours sunny locations and well-drained soil.

Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*)

Delicately fragrant, this annual climber is easily planted from seedlings in early spring. Make sure it has rich, moist soil, full sun, and add a support for the tendrils to wind around.▷

LEISURE garden

THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE
Bougainvillea makes a superb climber in sunny locations; the Mexican blood trumpet adds vibrance and shade to pergolas; (centre and centre right) choose sweet pea annuals for scent – the perennial varieties are unscented; papery bracts surrounding the tiny true flowers give bougainvillea their colour.



THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT
Fragrant star jasmine; the white potato vine also has a blue version; rose varieties such as Wedding Garland, New Dawn or Albertine make excellent climbers; potato vine is both fast growing and scented; versatile star jasmines also double as hardy groundcovers; *rosa banksiae* Purezza is a thornless Rambler that flowers repeatedly; climbing *rosa bracteata* McCartney blooms have an attractive gold centre.



WHITE

White potato vine (*Solanum jasminoides*)

‘White potato vine is just spectacular,’ says Steyn. ‘In fact, I prefer it to the common jasmine. It’s fast-growing, flowers throughout summer and is a reliable evergreen.’ Plant in a sunny spot and expect pretty clusters of flowers with a delicate scent. Well suited to arbours and trellises.

Star jasmine

(*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)

This versatile evergreen loves sun, but can take some shade, too. ‘Star jasmine can easily be coaxed onto metal structures or trimmed into shapes,’ says Steyn. ‘You can successfully mass-plant it on verges as a ground cover as well.’ Renowned for its heady fragrance, its peak flowering time is October to January.

Climbing roses (Wedding Garland)

A gorgeous white climber, Wedding Garland roses have long stems that can be trained against a support – both vertically and horizontally – to promote flowering. ‘Roses don’t self-adhere, so you’ll need to attach them to your structure,’ explains Steyn. Perfect for archways or pillars, this gently scented rose is also good for cut flowers. ▷





YELLOW

Cape honeysuckle (*Tecoma capensis*)

A year-round bloomer in warm areas, this indigenous scrambling shrub is a hardy gem, with tubular flower clusters that attract sunbirds, plus it's a host for several types of butterflies. Use it as a screen or against a wall, attached to a support.

False jasmine (yellow jessamine; *Gelsemium sempervirens*)

'For the relaxed gardener, this is a truly rewarding climber,' says Steyn. 'It's fast-growing, evergreen and has a long flowering period from late autumn to spring.' Good for trellises, pergolas or archways, the tumble of fragrant yellow flowers is a joy. Plant in full sun.

PURPLE

Petrea (purple wreath; *Petrea volubilis*)

Happiest in partial to full sun, petrea needs good support to bear its weight and keep it upright. Train over arches or fences, but make sure it's sheltered from frost. In spring, expect gorgeous sprays of violet, star-shaped blossoms.

Wisteria

Few climbers evoke such heady nostalgia. With its swathes of scented lilac racemes, deciduous wisteria is the perfect covering for arbours and pergolas. Post-bloom, you're left with attractive and abundant green leaves throughout the summer. It's best planted in full sun.

Chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*)

'I love this hardy, woody climber, which flowers from spring into summer,' says

THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A twining vine, false jasmine retains its leaves year round and produces sweetly-scented, trumpet-shaped blooms during its long flowering season; Cape honeysuckle attracts nectar-eating birds and insects; wisteria's spring display; golden shower is a vigorous tendril climber that flourishes on supports; detail of golden shower's trumpet-shaped flowers, which come in a range of oranges, reds and yellows; robust and deciduous, flame creepers sometimes form a scrambling shrub or small tree; the elegant chocolate vine; purple 'EnduraScape' verbena works well as a groundcover; petrea features lovely long racemes of delicate violet-purple star-like flowers, and also comes in a white flowering form.



Leoné Williams, owner of Petal Faire Nursery in Pretoria. 'The purple-brown flowers are striking and have a spicy vanilla scent.' This robust, sun-loving vine will scramble up established trees and over pergolas or fences.

Purple 'EnduraScape' verbena

'For quick-spreading colour in large gardens, you can't beat this vigorous verbena,' says specialist garden writer Alice Spenser-Higgs. Around 30cm high, this low grower is ideal for softening retaining walls and planting on kerbs. 'It handles the cold, but will also flower in extreme heat, flowering constantly throughout summer. Ensure it has full sun, well-prepared fertile soil and good drainage.'

ORANGE

Golden shower

(*Pyrostegia venusta*)

A sun-loving climber that boasts mass clusters of orange tubular flowers. The shower effect is best achieved when cascading from walls, pergolas or even water tanks. It spreads rapidly via suckers, so control with regular pruning.

Flame creeper

(*Combretum microphyllum*)

'This is a splendid woody climber that provides layers of orange/red,' says Williams. Great for closing gaps in larger gardens, the massed flowers appear in spring. It occurs naturally in bushveld areas, and is a magnet for butterflies and sunbirds. ☐

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