

Wisteria frutescens

American Wisteria

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

The wild native wisteria is a climbing vine with chains of richly colored, sweetly fragrant flowers, although not as dramatic or as rampant as its Asian cousins. This member of the Pea family is native to wet forests and stream banks of the southeastern United States.*



Vine	Vine and Close-up of Flowers Opening
Height: 15–30 feet	
Spread: 4–8 feet	
Bloom Color: Lavender, light violet-blue	
Characteristics	
Climbing, twining, woody deciduous vine	
Pinnate leaves bearing 9–15 pointed oval leaflets	
Erect to pendant violet-blue racemes from April to August; flowers at raceme base bloom first	
Flat, smooth, bean-like pods develop after flowers fade and split open in fall	
Yellow to golden autumn foliage	
Smooth, gray-brown stems; twines clockwise	
Attributes	
Tolerates drought, seasonal flooding; dislikes being transplanted; deer rarely damage	<p>Excellent Replacement for</p> <p><i>Wisteria floribunda</i> - Japanese Wisteria</p> <p><i>W. sinensis</i> - Chinese Wisteria</p>
Begins blooming when vine is a few feet long and only on new wood after plant leaves out	
Seeds are poisonous; harmful if eaten in quantity	
Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	
Soil Requirements: Slightly acidic, humus-rich	<p>*It is adventive (non-native, escaped from cultivation) in DE's Coastal Plain and endangered in PA where it is clustered mostly in the southwestern corner. In VA, it is rare as a native in the southern and central Coastal Plain and rare as an escape throughout. It is found in Fairfax County but that is probably an escape of the Midwest variant, "macrostachya."</p>
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade	
Water Requirements: Moist, Wet	
Best flower production in full sun	
Specific guidelines for when and how to prune	
Use as a climber on arbors, fences, posts, walls	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 5–9	
<i>developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria</i>	

Images by Elaine Mills (top) and Mary Free (bottom), Sunny Garden