

Bell County Master Gardener  
Tip of the Week  
By Robin Pohl  
“Passion Flower Vine”

A popular vine that is planted here in central Texas is the Passion Flower (passiflora). It comes in various shades of purple and red. Passion Flowers are primarily planted for their distinct abilities to attract the five species of butterfly larvae to their foliage and birds to their fruit. Although an attractive plant because of the flowers, the Passion Flower vine can quickly get out of control and begin to take over sections of your garden. Preventative maintenance can keep a Passion Flower vine under control and confined to an appropriate area of the garden.

First, Passion Flower vines need a strong trellis, arbor, or fence to climb on. The vines can be trained to grow on these structures with little damage from weight. If no structure exists, the vine will creep along the ground and find the closest shrub or bush and vertically overtake it. Some large, well-established plants such as a chaste tree or Turk's Cap can be partially covered by a Passion Flower and will continue to flourish. Other species, such as a small smoke tree or a rose bush, will die from lack of light when covered by the Passion Flower vine.

Passion Flower vines reproduce in the wild by roots growing away from the parent plant and then producing new vines along the root. These roots vary between 1-3 inches deep below the ground depending on soil condition. Roots can even travel underneath pavers and sent up new shoots between the cracks where they are almost impossible to control. A well-established parent plant can send out roots as far away as ten feet. In the next growing season, new vines will come up from the expanded root system and consequently reproduce, often in places where the vine becomes destructive.

To stop a Passion Flower vine from taking over your garden, the most important thing to do is continually remove the suckers from the parent plant. As soon as a shoot comes up in a place that it isn't wanted, dig it out and pull out the root as far as you can back to the parent plant. The longer the roots are left to grow, the harder it will be to remove them, and the farther the plant will travel. With proper maintenance and control, Passion Flower vines can be great assets to any garden. It is truly an unusual and striking sight to see. Just think of the butterflies it attracts and plant one where you can enjoy the sight!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)