

PASSION FLOWER VINE

Passiflora caerulea



Characteristics

- Vine
- Zone: 7 to 9
- Height: 10.00 to 25.00 feet
- Spread: 3.00 to 6.00 feet
- Bloom Time: Seasonal bloomer
- Bloom Description: Blue
- Sun: Full sun to part shade
- Water: Medium
- Maintenance: Medium
- Flower: Showy, Fragrant
- Attracts: Butterflies
- Fruit: Showy, Edible

Culture

Blue passionflower likes loose sandy or gravelly soils and does best when planted against a brick wall that retains heat during cold winter weather. Too much manure or compost will result in lush vegetative growth and poor flowering. This species will flower in a small pot, but it prefers plenty of root space and will do better in a roomy container. In Zone 8-9, the ideal location is against a warm south-facing old brick wall where an overhang prevents excessive drenching by heavy rains. Go light on fertilizer and water deeply, but infrequently; passionflowers should be encouraged to reach deep into the earth for water. When motivated to do so, they are capable of developing amazing root systems to sustain them through droughts and freezes. *Passifloras* flower on new growth, so they may be pruned early in the growing season. It is best to cut some stems back nearly to the base, rather than just trim the tips. The terminal buds may be pinched out to encourage branching. Always keep some green foliage on the plant to keep the sap rising and encourage rapid regrowth. Don't try to train passionflower to be too neat and compact.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Passiflora caerulea, commonly called blue passionflower, is a twining vine that can grow to 30 feet. The shiny leaves are usually lobed with five parts, but they can have as few as three lobes or as many as nine. They are evergreen in tropical climates, but deciduous where winters are cool. The white and purple-blue flowers which appear in summer may be as large as 4 inches across. They are followed by egg-size deep orange fruits from late summer through fall.

Problems

Passionflowers are subject to a wide array of pests and diseases, but most of them have minimal impact on well grown plants. Butterfly larvae are the exception; caterpillars readily devour the foliage of healthy mature plants. If you are clever and lucky, you can figure out how to pick off just enough caterpillars to have flowers, fruit and butterflies, too.

Garden Uses

Blue passionflower is typically grown in tropical gardens or greenhouses for the exotic beauty of its flowers. This species is widely cultivated for its value as a parent plant in *Passiflora* breeding programs. The fruits are also edible. They aren't very tasty raw, but they have a vaguely blackberry-like flavor and can be substituted in blackberry pie recipes.

Courtesy of Missouri Botanical Society Plant Finder