

American Wisteria

A Garden Guide

Wisteria is a stunning vine admired the world over. There are multiple types of Wisteria. We only carry **native** types of Wisteria, such as *Wisteria frutescens* and *Wisteria macrostachya* and this guide is tailored to these American species.



American Wisteria are found in moist bottomlands, river banks, and moist woods throughout the South, including in North Carolina. **American Wisteria are less aggressive, more disease resistant, and bloom later than the Asian types.** They are host to some butterfly species (more on that below), and rely on our native carpenter bees for pollination. Flowers are not only gorgeous, but lightly fragrant. Plants are deer-resistant and juglone tolerant - can be planted near Black Walnut trees.

Siting: Wisteria need 4-8 hours of direct sunlight, in moist, moderately fertile soil with good drainage. Wisteria require VERY sturdy structures to grow on, you cannot go wrong overengineering here. While less aggressive and damaging than Asian species, avoid planting at the foundation of buildings. All posts will need to be cemented into the ground. Plants do well on the sunny south side of structures, and can be trained on arbors, columns, walls, and more. Flower buds can be damaged by frosts and strong winds - some protection may be helpful. Wisteria does not like being transplanted.

Soil and Planting: Wisteria prefer a pH of 5.8-6.5, with moist, well-draining soil. Usually in our soils, Wisteria will need at least 1/2rd soil conditioner, mixed with our native clay. Applying mycorrhizae directly to the roots, just prior to planting, will improve plant resilience. Dig a hole 2-3x as wide as the pot, only as deep as the pot, plant the vine in the soil at the same height as it was in the pot. Apply 2-3" of mulch to the root zone, do not let it touch the trunk or any woody roots that might be visible.

Fertilizing: Wisteria are Nitrogen fixers, which means that they create their own. Due to this, use low-Nitrogen fertilizers on Wisteria. An application in the early spring can be helpful. Feeding them normal or high Nitrogen fertilizer can result in many new stems and leaves, but little flower bud formation. Rock Phosphate, Neptune's Harvest Seaweed Plant Food, and Compost Tea are all good options to consider.

Watering: Water as needed. Water deeply weekly during the first year, and during dry spells after that.

PRUNING

Wisteria thrives when pruned. Prune Wisteria twice yearly, Summer and Winter. Without pruning, they'll grow wildly with few blooms. American Wisteria **bloom on new wood**.

Summer Pruning:

- Prune after flowering. This is the time of year for heavy pruning.
- Choose which new long shoots you want to keep, and what to remove for overall shape. For the shoots you want to keep, cut back to 6". For shoots you do not want to keep, cut at their base. Look for root suckers on grafted types, now is a good time to remove them.

Winter Pruning:

- Use the same approach as summer, but winter is for more maintenance pruning. Once the leaves drop it is easier to see the branches and to choose what to keep, and what to remove. Remove unwanted side shoots and generally tidy up the plant.

Butterflies:



Host plant for Clouded Sulphur (*Colias philodice*), Eastern tailed-blue (*Everes comyntas*), Gray hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*), Long-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus proteus*), Marine Blue (*Leptotes marina*), Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*), Silver-spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*), Zarucco Duskywing (*Erynnis zarucco*)

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