

Supports for Climbers

by Rita Pelczar



Powder-Coated Steel Obelisk

PROVIDED A structure to accommodate its climbing habit, a vine can create a dramatic vertical display in a garden. (Suggestions for outstanding annual and tender perennial vines can be found in the article that begins on page 32.) The support itself can be decorative or simply utilitarian, but a robust vine requires one that is sturdy, while a more delicate climber can be well served by a lighter one.

The **Powder-Coated Steel Garden Obelisk** from Plow and Hearth (www.plowhearth.com) provides vigorous vines with a classically styled ornamental framework. Available in antique copper or bronze finishes, and in five-, seven-, or eight-foot heights to suit vines of different sizes, the obelisk has a diameter of only 11 to 14 inches, making it especially useful in tight spaces.

From Gardener's Edge (www.gardenersedge.com), a six-foot-tall **Windmill Obelisk**

provides instant visual interest. The black powder-coated steel frame is topped by a windmill-shaped weathervane that turns gently in the breeze. The four-sided frame, with its horizontal bars, offers a twining vine an attractive scaffold to climb. If your vine grows tall, you may want to trim it or train it downward so it doesn't interfere with the motion of the weathervane.

For growing vines against a wall, Gardener's Supply Company (www.gardeners.com) offers the **7-Foot Essex Half-Round Trellis**. The 15¼-inch-wide support has a matte-black finish that resembles wrought iron, and it's suitably sized to handle exuberant vines such as morning glories (*Ipomoea* spp.), sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*), or canary creeper (*Tropaeolum peregrinum*); it also works well for more subdued clematis (*Clematis* spp.). Sinking the lower portion of the support into the ground is sufficient for smaller vines, but for heavy ones, you may want to secure the top of the trellis to the wall so it doesn't fall forward under the vine's weight.



Windmill Obelisk



7-Foot Essex Half-Round Trellis

The **Jardin Pot Trellis**, also from Gardener's Supply Company, is great for more delicate climbers, such as black-eyed Susan vine (*Thunbergia alata*) and twining snapdragon (*Maurandya scandens*), that are grown in containers. It is suitable for a container 14 inches or more in diameter and arrives as two rustic-finished steel pieces that assemble easily to create a support with a graceful hourglasslike silhouette. Alternatively, each piece can be used separately as half-round supports. The trellis provides over 40 inches of climbing space.

Lee Valley Tools (www.leevalley.com) offers the 48-inch **Maypole** for vines in large containers. Its black powder-coated steel central stake features an attractive finial at the top from which polypropylene strings radiate. The central pole should be sunk 12 inches into the soil to secure it. The strings—which you can place at any suit-



Jardin Pot Trellis



Maypole



Bamboo Kit with Garden Connectors

able angle, are held in the soil by galvanized steel pegs. For larger vines, including vining vegetables such as peas, pole beans, or Malabar spinach (*Basella alba*), an 86-inch Maypole is available.

I love simple solutions like the **Bamboo Kit with Garden Connectors** from Gardener's Edge, which provides an easy and inexpensive way to support vines in any informal ornamental garden or vegetable

patch. Slender bamboo stakes—available in four-, five-, and six-foot lengths—slide easily through the holes in the flexible silicon rubber connectors, allowing you to create the style of trellis that suits you—from a teepee to an A frame to a piece of lattice. Each pole can be sunk into the ground at your desired distance. It's ideal for supporting peas and beans, including the ornamental scarlet runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) and hyacinth bean (*Lablab purpureus*). It's also the perfect support for a child-friendly, vine-clad "tent."

In addition to saving space in the vegetable garden, growing cucumbers on a trellis allows the fruits to hang, so that they develop long and straight—and away from ground pests. The **Deluxe Cucumber Trellis** from Gardener's Supply Company is a sturdy, double-panel, A-frame structure made of powder-coated steel; each panel is about 32 inches wide by 48 inches high. It's easy to fit your hand through the four-inch grid openings in the panels for harvesting, and it folds flat for storage at the end of the growing season. The trellis is available in red, green, and black.

These and other vine supports will make the most of your ground space while providing productive and attractive vertical accents in all of your gardens.

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Deluxe Cucumber Trellis