

Wisteria species

This well-known vine needs little introduction. A stunning sight in springtime as it leafs out and flowers with large, drooping clusters of fragrant flowers, in this case an eye-catching and the less seen variety in common white. The vine often climbs trees and is most striking when seen in full bloom draped and accented from the limbs of a tall tree. After flowering, very attractive, velvety seed pods are produced. Remember though that it is deciduous and its winter form can be unsightly. Its rapid rate of growth makes it a good candidate when fast coverage is desirable and it is usually very long-lived with trunks becoming quite large - but always remember it is an exotic and potentially invasive.

Wisteria can grow in full sun or heavy shade. It is not fussy about soil type or moisture, although its preference is reasonably a moist, well drained, rich to average mix.

You can use Wisteria as a feature plant trained over a trellis or a building, espaliered against a wall or as a container specimen – a useful way to grow as it can restrict run away growth. It also makes an excellent bonsai subject.

Wisteria is rampant; it can grow in full sun or heavy shade in which case it will grow until it reaches a satisfactory level of light. It is not fussy about soil type or moisture, although its preference is reasonably a moist, well drained, rich to average mix.

Light: Sun preferred.

Moisture: Average.

Very hardy and frost resistant.

Propagation

Sowing: Sow in spring or autumn at 13 to 18°C. Soak the seeds for 24 hours in warm water. The aim in soaking seeds is to have them take in water and this is indicated by the seeds swelling, usually to at least double the initial thickness. If seed does not swell initially then soak again. water penetration can be assisted by lightly nicking the outer edge of recalcitrant seeds and by adding a very small amount of detergent soaking water to overcome any natural oiliness.

Fill small pots or trays with good quality seedling compost, stand the pots in water and allow them to drain.

Sow the seeds 2cm deep, cover with soil and spray the top with water. Alternatively, you can germinate your seeds in a medium such as pure sphagnum moss kept lightly

moist and then sow. Sphagnum moss is a good choice as it has natural anti-fungal qualities. Other growing medium is suitable but best if fumigated.

Place the pots in a warm position and optionally place the container in a plastic bag to maintain warmth. Keep the soil misted, but not overly saturated.

Germination occurs within 30 to 60 days (usually 3 to 4 weeks).

After the seedlings have a set of true leaves, prick them gently out of the pot and pot up separately. Put the pots outdoors in a place that is protected from direct sunlight and extremes of weather, wind.

They can be planted directly in the desired spot as long as you have at least 45 days before the first frost.

