Purple Leaf Grape
A WaterWise Woody Vine

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*Vitis vinifera* ‘Purpurea’ is a purple-leaf relative of our wine grapes. Unlike its agricultural relatives, this hardy climbing vine grows to only 30 feet, but it may be pruned to keep it lower. What they have in common is that fall is “their time of year.”

In late October, commercial grapes are ready for harvest, with fruit hanging heavily on the vines. This is also the time when the Purple Leaf Grape is a real show-off with fall color of deep reddish purple. Although this variety also makes fruit, they are considered by some to have a rather unpleasant taste. However, its ornamental features and use as either a climber or as a groundcover, make up for the lack of fruit flavor.

Three years after planting, the two vines in front of the OSU Extension Office in Yamhill County are just beginning to reach eye-catching size. It has been well worth the wait, and many visitors have already commented on them and asked questions. Because of its success and non-invasive characteristics, we featured it in *GardenSmart Oregon* as an alternative to English Ivy.

Although it adapts to many different soils, growth and color are best in full sun. It is also considered to be WaterWise, so can be used in drought-tolerant landscapes. To add to its credits, the species has also been selected as a “Great Plant Pick” by the Elizabeth Carey Miller Botanical Garden.

Remember, fall is a great time to plant woody trees, shrubs, and vines. Purple Leaf Grape is commercially available in Oregon at specialty nurseries, so now is a good time to search it out.

*Purple Leaf Grape on an arbor mixed with regular table grapes.*
*Photo by Deb Zaveson*