

Bignonia capreolata L.

Cross Vine

(*Anisostichus capreolata*, *Anisostichus crucigera*, *Doxantha capreolata*)

Other Common Names: Crossvine, Quartervine, Trumpet Flower.

Family: Bignoniaceae.

Cold Hardiness: *B. capreolata* is cold hardy to USDA zones 6a (6b) through 9 (10).

Foliage: Cross Vine has opposite trifoliate leaves which appear as two outer leaflets with the center leaf replaced by a contorted long green branched tendril having tiny terminal cup-like disks similar to those seen on *Parthenocissus spp.* rather than nodal aerial rootlets as on *C. radicans*; leaflets are broadly lanceolate to narrowly ovate, (3" 4" to 6" (7") long by 1" to 2" wide, with cordate bases, long acuminate tips, and entire to slightly undulate margins; venation is pinnate, lightly impressed above, raised beneath, and curving forward near the edges, merging to form an outer rim of more or less continuous veins; new leaves may have a reddish flush as they emerge; the stoutish petiole and petiolules may initially be flushed red and be hairy, later maturing to a darker green and less noticeably pubescent; leaves often take on a reddish purple caste in winter.

Flower: Sometimes this species is confused in flower with *C. radicans*; flowers are borne in axillary clusters on mature plants; they are narrowly trumpet-shaped and 1½" to 2½" long; the corolla is five-lobed, and orange-red to purple-red on the exterior with a yellowish throat; the flowers are more or less two-lipped, with the upper lip composed of two somewhat smaller lobes and the lower three larger lobes; flowers occur at a peak in late winter to mid-spring, then tail off as the heat of summer approaches, occurring only sporadically throughout the remainder of the summer; flowering on some cultivars can be so prolific as to cover the canopy, while most of the wild types have sparser flowering.

Fruit: Flattened woody capsules mature in late summer to autumn changing from green to light brown to brown and drying; capsules are 4" to 6" long by about 1" wide and contain numerous flattened winged seeds typical of the family Bignoniaceae, but the capsules are not ornamental.

Stem / Bark: Stems — the twigs have a pith that produces an X or cross shape when cut in cross-section; shoots are sinuous, medium to dark green, and sometimes flushed a purplish red as they mature; short hairs are present to varying degrees initially, becoming less noticeable on older stems; Buds — nodes are widely spaced between long internodes; buds few scaled, small, mostly green, often elongating shortly after formation; Bark — older stems turning brown to gray-brown with age.

Habit: Cross Vine is a rapid growing semi-evergreen to evergreen woody vine that climbs by twining and adhesive tendrils, thus it can climb vertical walls to 50' or so in height; growth rates are moderately fast and the overall texture is medium.

Cultural Requirements: This species is tolerant of a wide variety of soils from those that are seasonally wet to moderately droughty sites once established, however they do tolerate extended drought; plants are soil pH adaptable and very heat tolerant; plant in a sunny to partly sunny location; although a nice native vine requiring only moderate maintenance, sometimes established plants will succumb for no apparent reason.

Pathological Problems: Few insect or disease problems usually develop in the landscape, however mealy bug infestations are sometimes reportedly require control.

Ornamental Assets: Dark glossy green leaves are a general garden asset, but the primary attraction is the early off-season flowers which can be spectacular *en masse*, particularly with some of the new improved cultivars.

Limitations & Liabilities: *Bignonia capreolata* can become rampant once established and needs room to spread.

Landscape Utilization: Cross Vine can be used for naturalizing, as an informal bank cover, on trellises and arbors, and as a masonry wall cover if one is patient and plants can grasp an occasional perch; *Bignonia capreolata* is probably not as quick a study at climbing vertical walls as *C. radicans*; flowers of Cross Vine can be grown to attract hummingbirds and this is an excellent vine to hide chain link fences; avoid placing on trees due to its vigorous growth.

Other Comments: The genus *Bignonia* L. honors the 18th century French librarian Abbé Jean Paul Bignon; the specific epithet refers to the twining nature of the tendrils; many taxa in related genera, including *Campsis*, were once included in a broader interpretation of the genus *Bignonia*.

Native Habitat: Native to the Southeastern USA, including East Texas.

Related Taxa: This is a plant that deserves to be more extensively planted; there are several improved cultivars

emerging in the trade; one of the best is *B. capreolata* 'Tangerine Beauty' with masses of winter to spring tangerine colored flowers and an extended bloom time lasting much further into the summer than most genotypes.

References: Burras, 1994; Dirr, 2009; Grimm, 1993; Howard, 1959.

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