



# Chocolate Vine

*Akebia quintata*

Lardizabala Family (Lardizabalaceae)

Zones: 4-8

Full Sun to Part Shade

Moderate Water

Location: Childrens Garden, Fragrance Garden

Akebia (or Fiveleaf Akebia as it is sometimes called) is a twining, woody vine that is native to Japan, Korea and China. The name akebia is actually the latinization of the Japanese word 'akebi'. It was brought to the United States in 1845 and in warmer climates, has naturalized.

This plant grows 20 to 40 feet. It thrives in well-drained sandy soils, but grows easily in most soils. It likes full sun to partial shade and tolerates drought. It is semi-evergreen, but deciduous in Zones 4 – 6.

Akebia needs to grow on a structure, but can also be grown as a ground cover in shady or woodland areas. May also be used to cover up unsightly objects such as an unremoved tree trunk or an old chain link fence. It is also useful for erosion control and slope stabilization.

It is sometimes called chocolate vine. The flowers are small and purplish brown, which is how the name came to be. It blooms mid-May or sometimes earlier and has delightfully fragrant flowers. In order to produce fruit, it may need to be hand-pollinated. The leaves are palmately compound and have 5 petioles that grow to 2 to 3 inches in length. When the leaves first emerge, they have a purplish tinge to them, but later age to greenish-blue color.

The plant produces showy, edible fruit usually after a long, hot summer. The fruit is violet-purple and oblong shaped pods. Inside you will find a white pulpy core with tiny black seeds disbursed throughout. A common way to serve this fruit is stuffed with miso and chicken. However, it is still tasty when enjoyed by itself.

Rampant growth can be a problem, and it may choke out other surrounding plants. It is listed as an invasive species in New Zealand, along with some eastern states. Pruning should be done in the late fall or early spring.