



CLEMATIS

Not Difficult, Just Exacting

Although it has a reputation for being difficult to grow, it is not. Provide the right location, regular watering, some exacting care and support and the Clematis will thrive.

A well-drained rich soil with a pH of 7 is the first requirement. Start by digging out the planting area to a depth and width of 18", or twice the size of the root ball, whichever is greatest. Cover the bottom of the hole with well-rotted manure or compost mixed with a handful of bonemeal. Cover the compost with good topsoil so the roots won't be in direct contact with it.

Choose a cool, weed-free location. Clematis likes their feet in the shade and their head in the sun. Low growing shrubs, perennials, rocks, pebbles, groundcovers, driftwood; etc. can provide shade for the roots. Most varieties require at least 4 hours of full sun.

Soak the clematis (nursery pot and all) in cool water for 20 minutes before planting. Gently slip the plant out of the pot and into the hole. Allow 4"-6" of the stem to be below the soil line.

Fill the planting hole with good topsoil and firmly pack around the root ball, being careful not to break the stems.

Clematis usually take about 3 years to mature, be patient. All varieties should be cut back when planted to encourage strong roots and a healthy multi-stemmed plant. When the leaf buds begin to show cut the stems back so as to leave 2 sets of buds above the soil line on each stem.

In subsequent years the pruning of your clematis depends on the variety and when it blooms. All Clematis are divided into three groups, if you know which group your variety belongs to then prune accordingly.

Group 1 requires no pruning. If you need to prune to keep the plant within it's space, then prune immediately after flowering. This group blooms on old wood. Examples: alpinas, macropetelas, montanas, arandii, and early blooming species.

Group 2 is large flowered hybrids that bloom in the spring and again in the fall. They bloom on short shoots from old wood. They should not be pruned, except to remove deadwood. Wait until late spring when the buds have opened to be sure the stems are dead before pruning, then prune to a bud at least 3' - 4' above the ground.

Examples: Nelly Moser, The President, Silver Moon, Mrs. Cholmondeley, etc.

ROOTS & SHOOTS



Group 3 bloom on new wood in early summer, continuing until fall, and should be pruned back hard in the spring. Leave at least 4 buds on each stem. These are very fast growing and will reach their full height before blooming each summer. If they are not pruned back they will develop long woody legs with no foliage.

Examples: viticellas, herbaceous types, late flowering, Jackmanii, Ernest Markham, etc.

Never prune Clematis back in the fall as the winter may kill the stems back to the roots and the plant may not survive.

Keep the roots cool and moist. If the plant begins to show signs of decline in the summer it is probably because the soil has become too hot or dry. Apply a 4" layer of mulch over the roots.

A leaf spot or stem rot fungal disease can affect clematis. Stems may suddenly wilt or leaves may develop light spots with dark, reddish borders. Damage usually begins at the bottom of the plant. This disease enters the plant through damaged tissue, so be careful when planting or working around your plant not to injure stems or leaves. Prune the wilted stems just above the soil level. This disease can spread to healthy plants, so after removing the infected stems spray the remaining healthy plants with an organic sulfur fungicide.

Clematis borer can cause the plant to be stunted and the leaves soft and hanging. The larvae feed inside the roots and crown and are difficult to control.

Spider mites will attack Clematis in hot, dry weather and cause leaves to turn pale with a yellow, gray, or bronze tinge. A close look at the leaves you will see tiny spots and maybe very fine webs. The plant becomes weakened and may die. Spray the plant with a strong stream of water from the garden hose, being sure to spray the underside of the leaves. Repeat spraying every other day for two weeks. An organic insecticide may be required for severely infected plants.