

Clematis Plant Care

Plant Care

Location: Clematis will require an area that will have at least a half day or more direct sunlight. The plant depending on the variety will grow upright six to twelve feet. Although it can only grow as tall as the trellis, arbor or support that you have given it. For example, if your trellis is eight feet tall and the clematis you choose grows to twelve feet, it would simply hang over and grow down the other side.

Also, many have heard the old wives' tale that you need to keep the roots shaded. The reasoning behind this is to keep the roots from drying out. You can do this simply with mulch, this will help to keep the weeds down but most important will keep the moisture in, especially in a hot dry summer.

Soil Preparation: Clematis need a moist, well-drained soil. Prepare your hole at least one foot deep and mix 50% peat moss or well-rotted manure. Backfill hole with the amended soil and plant your clematis so the top of the root ball is just below the ground level burying the first set of eyes. The plant should be mulched and kept moist, not wet, especially during the first growing season. Fertilize every four weeks during the growing season with a well-balanced liquid fertilizer.

Support: The main stem of the clematis must have a firm support, otherwise damage may occur through wind. As the newly planted clematis produces new growth this should be carefully trained and tied into position.

Pruning

The first year: All newly planted clematis should be pruned down to at least twelve inches the first April-May after planting. This is very important, and you will be rewarded with a more bushy, compact plant, full of flowers.

Although if no pruning is done, the plant will still grow and flower. But you will not enjoy the same display you would if the pruning was done properly.

Group 1 (none): There are three types of pruning for an established clematis. The first is for the species that produce their flowers generally on stems produced the previous season. This group consists of the evergreen species, the alpina and macropetala types and the montana group. This group produces their flowers directly from the old stems and, therefore, should not be pruned until all flowering has been completed.

Pruning for this group consists of removing all dead and weak stems after flowering. Tie all stems into position immediately after pruning. A well-established plant should not require any pruning.

Group 2 (moderate): The next group of clematis consists of the early large-flowering cultivars, the double and semi-double and mid-season clematis. These clematis will produce their flowers on the old or previous season's stems. The flowers develop on single stems which vary from three to thirty inches in length. Whether the stems that carry the flowers are long or short, the first flowers will always bear from the previous season's ripened stems.

The pruning and tying of stems should be done in early spring when weather permits. Remove all dead and weak stems, and trim the remaining stems five to eight inches to where a strong pair of leaf buds appear. All the remaining stems should be tied in a position that gives sufficient space for new growth.

Group 3 (hard): The third and last group of clematis bear their flowers on new growth each year and in most cases, each stem produces several flowers. The old or previous season's growth dies away naturally each winter. Therefore, all old growth must be removed to allow the current season's stems' room to grow, giving the plant a fresh start each year.

Prune this group in late April or early May depending on weather conditions. Pruning consists of removing all old top growth down to where the strong new leaf axil buds appear, just above the base of the previous season's stems.

If you choose the right location and prepare your soil correctly, prune and fertilize, you will have a beautiful plant for many years. One of our employees has a beautiful clematis that she planted in 1968! That's over 30 years old!