

Clematis Culture Tips

Clematis are noted as exceptional flowering vines. Bloom period ranges from four weeks to several months depending on variety. The large-flowered hybrids may have blooms ranging from four to ten inches in diameter and as many as 100 blooms per plant in a season.

Clematis requires full sun to grow well (6+ hours), but some dappled shade during the day is beneficial. Though the plant stems and foliage should be in sun, the roots like a cool, moist environment. With the exception of *C. montana*, clematis does not compete well with large tree roots.

Clematis prefers a rich well-drained soil with a pH close to neutral. On heavy soil incorporate one bag of peat humus, one bag of fine sand, and ½ cup of agriculture lime to a three-foot-square area to a depth of about two feet. Plant the clematis about one inch deeper than the existing soil level. Cut the plant down to about 12-14 inches, leaving about four sets of leaves. Place a protective collar of hardware cloth or fence around the base of the plant to protect against weed eaters, lawn mowers and animals. Then add a two-inch layer of mulch. This will help retain soil moisture, keep weeds down, and keep the soil cool. Water in the plant with a liquid fertilizer solution such as Miracle Gro. In the first season there may be little growth with few or no blooms. However, it is important to get the roots well established. Apply ½ cup of 18-5-9 fertilizer in a circle around the plant about 18 inches from the center of the plant. Fertilize annually in the early spring using ½ cup of 18-5-9 fertilizer.

The main purpose in pruning is to help plants produce the maximum number of flowers. Annual pruning is recommended but all clematis should *not* be pruned in the same way. Depending on the time of year the clematis flowers, the following pruning methods are recommended:

Group A – Flowers only on growth produced the previous year. Prune as soon as they finish blooming in May or June. Later pruning will result in fewer blooms the following spring. Montana varieties fall into this group.

Group B1 – Flowers on wood that has been hardened by the previous season's growth. Most of these plants bloom heavily in May-June on previous season's growth, then produce a smaller flush in September on the current season's growth.

Group B2 – These varieties bloom simultaneously on last year's growth and the current season's growth, normally from June to September.

For B1 and B2 plants, we recommend a light pruning in late February or March to remove any weak or dead wood, allowing for some variation in the length of the stems. Space the stems to allow room for next spring's blooms. If your plant is old and neglected, prune it severely. You will sacrifice some blooms this year, but will produce a better plant in the long run.

Group C – These varieties bloom only on the current year's growth. Blooms begin in early summer and continue through fall. Prune plants in late February or March to two strong sets of buds on each stem, as close to ground level as possible.