

MEL'S

where home and garden come together

CLEMATIS

PLANTING AND CARE

Where to plant:

Plant clematis in an area with at least five to six hours of sunlight. The roots are long and deep, and like cool and damp places. Plant ground cover around the roots or plant along a shady wall or fence where the vines can climb into the sunlight. A good tip to remember about clematis- they like their heads in the sun and their feet in the shade.

How to plant:

Depending on the size of the plant, loosen soil to a diameter of two feet, for a two to five gallon size. Mix peat moss and compost into soil. Place crown at soil level. Provide support with a fence, trellis or pole. Handle with care – clematis stems are very fragile!

Care after planting:

Water freely the first year. After the first year, soak well once a week in dry weather. Mulch in the summer, to retain moisture. Mulch in the winter, to prevent roots from freezing.

Fertilizing:

Feed twice during the growing season, using 5-10-10, 14-14-14, 20-20-20 or vegetable time release fertilizer, such as Osmocote, with a small amount of lime.

Pruning:

Pruning should be done the first spring after planting. Clematis should be pruned according to their bloom time.

GROUP 1 are early bloomers comprise plants that flower on old wood or last year's growth. No pruning is necessary but if you want to limit size, cut back stems that have produced flowers as soon as they finish blooming. Don't cut any trunks, and leave the larger, woody stems unless you need to reshape the plant.

GROUP 3 the later flowering varieties consist of varieties that bloom on new growth, anytime from mid June to fall,

some flower repeatedly all summer long. Late flowering varieties should be pruned heavily in March, once they are established. Prune back six to twelve inches from the ground. When making your pruning cut, cut just above a pair of strong buds. Shoot tips may be pinched during late spring to help with additional branching. Cut out all dead wood.

There is an additional group of clematis comprised of plants that have large flowers on old wood in late spring, then smaller flowers in late summer on the current year's growth. This is the GROUP 2 varieties. In very early spring, before new growth begins, cut back to the topmost pair of buds. This is probably all that is needed. You can, however, experiment with a second pruning. As soon as the first flush of bloom is over, cut one or two stems down to strong buds that are about two feet from the ground. If this produces good results, you can prune all of them that way the next year.

Some examples of varieties in these groups:

GROUP 1

Clematis alpine, c. macropetala, c. armandii, c. chrysocoma, c. montana

Cultivars: 'Edo Murasaki', 'General Sikorski'

GROUP 2

Cultivars: 'Dutchess of Edinburgh', 'Lanuginosa Candida', 'Guernesey Cream', 'Will Goodwin', 'Henrii'

GROUP 3

Clematis integrifolia, c. tangutica, c. terniflora, c. texensis, c. viticella, c. x jackmanii, sweet autumn

If your not sure what variety of clematis you have, prune just one or two stems as though for Group 3 and watch what happens compared to the stems you left alone.