

## PERENNIAL CARE

# clematis 101

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*Clematis* are unmatched in their versatility and beauty, offering a variety of well over 250 species, including the North American native *Clematis virginiana*, as well as hundreds of cultivars that appeal to the casual gardener and avid collector alike.

Vining *Clematis* are grouped by bloom time to help simplify their care. Group 1 (spring bloomers), Group 2 (repeat bloomers), and Group 3 (summer or fall bloomers). Though *Clematis* should be left standing through the winter to protect their crown and provide winter interest, annual spring pruning will promote better blooming performance and healthier, more attractive plants.

### Group 1

Early flowering, sets buds on old wood (the previous season's growth), and blooms in the spring on mature stems. Little pruning is required, and any pruning should be conducted immediately after flowering in mid-summer. Prune no later than the end of July to avoid interfering with bud set for next season. Not regularly offered at Tonkadale.

### Group 2

Early, large-flowered hybrids, blooming twice: first in late spring through early summer on old wood, and again in mid-summer to fall on new wood (the current season's growth). Prune in late winter or early spring, completely removing any dead or weak stems. Cut back remaining stems by about a 1/3 to just above a pair of strong, swollen buds. If desired, additional pruning should be conducted immediately after the first flush of late spring blooms to help encourage rebloom.

### Group 3

Late flowering, blooming from mid-summer to fall on new wood. Includes the first modern large-flowered hybrid, *Clematis* 'Jackmanii,' and the fall-blooming *C. paniculata* 'Sweet Autumn.' Prune in late winter or early spring one to two feet up from the base of the plant, leaving at least two bud pairs per stem.

## Planting

- *Clematis* prefer moist, well-drained soils in full sun but will tolerate part sun, and are intolerant of high soil temperatures.
- More shade tolerant cultivars include: 'Abilene,' 'Bernadine,' 'Candy Stripe,' 'Claire de Lune,' 'Corrine,' 'Jackmanii,' 'Nelly Moser,' 'Samaritan Jo,' 'Sarah Elizabeth,' 'Silver Moon,' and 'Tranquilite.'
- Before planting, cut stems with a sterile blade back to 12" tall above a pair of low buds to encourage branching, and promote the formation of additional shoots.
- Dig a hole twice as wide and slightly deeper than the root ball. New *Clematis* should be planted one to two inches deeper than they were grown in their container to help protect the crown.
- Mulch plants well to cool the root zone and provide additional winter protection, taking care to leave four to six inches of spac between stems and mulch to allow for adequate airflow.
- Position companion plantings to help keep *Clematis* roots shaded and cool while their blooms soak up the sun.
- Avoid disturbing the root zone or moving *Clematis* after planting, and allow new plantings a minimum of three years to establish and begin producing significant vine growth.

## Care

- Support *Clematis* by planting about 12" from a trellis, tripod, or other structure to allow their twining leaf petioles to climb.
- Carefully help plants to start twining around new supports.
- Fertilize one to two times per season in mid-spring and mid-summer with a bloom-focused fertilizer such as Espoma Flower Tone or a standard all-purpose fertilizer like Osmocote.

## Clematis Wilt

Avoid stem breakage when tying up or handling plants to help prevent Clematis Wilt, a localized fungal disease introduced through wounds. Mostly affecting younger, large-flowered hybrid *Clematis*, this fungus causes sudden stem collapse, often just before buds open. Stems and leaves then turn black and dye-off above lesions within a few days. Careful handling and sanitation are the best means of prevention. Diseased stems should be cut to the ground with a sterile blade and thrown away immediately, not composted. Apply a fungicide to protect from further disease spread.