

# Clematis Planting & Pruning Information



## When to Plant

Clematis can be planted as soon as the ground is workable. Clematis react to the seasons much like bulbs. In the summer and fall, there is vigorous root growth where energy is stored for next year's growth. Come spring, clematis will produce two or three feet of top growth before any noticeable root activity. For this reason, in mild regions, fall planting is ideal. If planting in spring or summer, it is useful to periodically pinch out the growing tips.

If planting in the fall, pruning during the following spring is ideal, no matter which pruning group the clematis belongs to. Although this will inhibit flowering for the first year, it will help promote root development and produce a bushier plant.

If planting is done in the heat of the summer, sufficient water must be provided to keep roots moist and cool.

## How to Plant

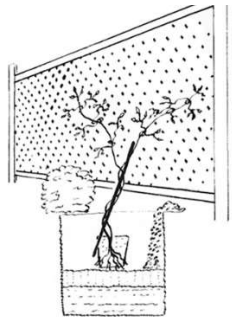
Be diligent in selecting a spot to plant: imagine where it will grow, and make sure your location provides sufficient light and well-drained soil. There are clematis over eighty years old still blooming marvelously, thanks to well-planned planting.

Clematis needs a cool, moist, well-drained, deep root run; with plenty of water. A little special preparation will ensure the proper environment. Dig a hole 18" deep by 18" wide. Cover the bottom with a good rich compost or well-rotted manure. A handful of bone meal mixed with your soil is always a good idea. Add enough topsoil to cover the compost, and then you are ready to plant. Place your well-watered clematis in the hole so that about 6" of the stem is below the finished soil line. The stem of your clematis needs to be ripe before you bury it. If there is any concern about this, leave the final filling of the hole until later in the season. Be extra careful not to let a clematis fall over or the stems can easily become damaged. If the stems do become kinked, consider it only a minor setback as the stem might die but the plant will quickly recover. Securely attach the stems to a support so that they won't blow over in the wind. Planting a small shrub in front will ensure a cool root run for the clematis. If planted against a wall, a trellis should be constructed in such a way that it can be let down in one piece at house painting time.

## Planting Clematis on a Fence or Trellis

Unless you intend to use them as a ground cover, clematis need something to climb on. Sweet pea netting or plastic mesh work well.

- Carefully, but securely, attach the vine to a cane to lead the stem to a fence.
- Backfill with good quality topsoil mixed with a handful of bone meal (if your soil has a high clay content, add peat moss).
- The top of the root ball should be at least 6" (15cm) below ground level.
- Top with 6" (15cm) of well-rotted manure mixed with good topsoil or compost.
- The base of the hole should contain good topsoil.
- Where practical, it is a good idea to plant a small shrub to shade the roots of your clematis.



## Planting to Grow Through a Tree

If it is not practical to plant away from the base of the tree, consider planting in a large bottomless container right at the base of the tree, following the information provided in the "Planting in Containers."

Clematis needs something to climb on. Sweet pea netting or plastic mesh work well. Carefully but securely attach the vine to the supporting structure attached to the tree trunk.

Many varieties of clematis can climb high into a tree and throughout its canopy of branches. Non-flowering trees become adorned with large colorful blossoms from the clematis planted at the base of the tree. If you are planning on growing clematis up a large tree, the most vigorous and largest growing varieties are the montanas, which can grow 50 feet or higher. Many other varieties, such as Jackmanii, can surpass 30 feet and can also work well. For temperate areas, *C. armandii* can also work very well. More compact

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varieties such as The President are suitable for smaller trees such as Japanese Maples. If possible, plant outside the drip line of the host tree.



## Pruning Information

“To prune or not to prune,” is the most often asked question. It should be noted that incorrect pruning will never bring an early death to the clematis. At worst, an inappropriate pruning will only delay flowering. Furthermore, if all varieties were left unpruned, they would all flower very well. However, as is explained below, the flowers would not necessarily cover the plant as well as they otherwise could.

Our first tip on pruning applies to all clematis varieties. The first February or March after planting all clematis should be cut back. At this time, you should be able to see leaf buds developing as your plant breaks dormancy. You should leave two sets of buds on each stem between where you make your cut and the soil level. In subsequent years the following recommendations should be used.

To simplify things, we have used three main pruning categories.

**Group A** are varieties that flower only on growth produced the previous year. Pruning should consist of cutting out weak or dead stems as soon as they are finished blooming in May or June. Pruning later than June or very severe pruning will result in fewer blooms the following spring. The very popular montana varieties fall into this group and even though they will survive in our colder climates, if the tops are nipped off by extreme frosts, blooms that should have occurred in early spring might occur in the fall, if at all.

**Group B** Group B is broken down into two subgroups:

- **Group B1** are the varieties that flower on wood that has been hardened by the previous season’s growth. Normal blooming patterns for this group consist of a heavy flush of flowers in May – June on the previous season’s growth followed by a second smaller flush of blooms in September on the current season’s growth.
- **Group B2** are the varieties that bloom simultaneously on last year’s growth and the current season’s growth. Group B (2) varieties normally bloom from June to September continuously. For pruning purposes, these varieties can be treated either as group B (1) or group C and for that reason work extremely well in

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combination plantings with group B (1) or group C varieties. If planted alone a group C pruning regime every second year is recommended.

For both groups B1 and B2, in late February or March light pruning with some variation in the length of the stems will help produce a well-balanced group B plant. Any weak or dead wood should be removed at this time and careful spacing of the remaining stems is all that is required. The spacing of the stems will allow room for next spring's mass of blooms to open pleasingly. Severe pruning will reduce the number of blooms at the plant's next flowering but will not hurt the plant; in many cases, it will help produce a better-balanced plant. If your group B clematis has been neglected for many years, it can be rejuvenated by severely cutting back most of the old growth. It is always amazing how quickly new growth appears. Separate and direct the new shoots or they will soon grow skyward in a tangled mess.

**Group C** varieties bloom only on the current year's growth. Blooms commence in early summer and continue through fall. Plants should be cut back in late February or March to two strong sets of buds on each stem as close to ground level as possible. This will provide a plant with blooms that start near ground level and continue to the top of the plant. If you want to grow a group C clematis through a tree or have it bloom in an area above its normal blooming height, simply leave it unpruned – since Group C clematis bloom on the current season's growth, the blooms will be at the top of the plant and a bare stem at the base will gradually appear over a few years. This provides an opportunity to plant a lower-growing group B variety to hide the bare stem and extend the blooming season. You can prune an established plant at almost any height or not prune at all to accomplish your objective.

<b>Variety - Group</b>	
Arabella - C	Multi Blue - B2
Asao - B1	Nelly Moser - B1
Bees Jubilee - B1	Niobe - B2 or C
Charissima - B1	Piilu - B1
Comtesse De Bouchard - C	Pink Fantasy - C
Countess Lovelace - B1	Prince Phillip - B2
Daniel Deronda - B1	Rhapsody - C
Dr. Ruppel - B1	Rouge Cardinal - C
Duchess of Edinburgh - B1	The First Lady - B1
Florida Sieboldii - B2	The President - B2
Guernsey Cream - B1	The Vagabond - B2
Haku Ookan - B1	Vancouver™ Danielle - B1
H.F. Young - B1	Vancouver™ Fragrant Star - B1
Jackmanii Superba - C	Vancouver™ Mystic Gem - B1
Joan Picton - B2	Westerplatte - B2
Kilian Donahue - B1	