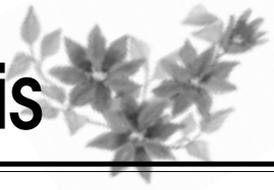


Clematis



Clematis, the “Aristocrat of Climbing Plants”, has graced porches, light posts, fences and gazebos of American homes since the late 1920’s.

About Clematis

Clematis vines are available in two main types:

Hybrid varieties, which bloom at various times from May to October. Individual flowers can last 3 to 4 weeks and grow over 8-inches in diameter. Hybrid clematis are available in brilliant shades of purple, blue, and crimson, white, and bi-colors.

Species varieties, which have abundant small flowers. Generally, they need no pruning and are very vigorous. Some species clematis have a light fragrance, and many have attractive seedheads. Many of these varieties are easy to grow.

Where to Plant

Grow clematis in either a sunny location or in part-shade — against a sturdy post, arbor, trellis, rail or fence. A wire or picket fence is ideal, for here the clematis needs very little attention if properly tied. Select a location where the roots can remain cool, but the vines can climb into the sun. An ideal situation can be provided by planting a low ground cover at the base of the vines.

How to Plant

Dig a hole 2 feet wide and 2 feet deep. Fill the bottom with 6 to 8 inches of stones for drainage. Mix the soil which has been removed from the hole with half again as much good topsoil and two handfuls of dolomitic lime. The lime will raise the pH — clematis prefer an alkaline or “sweet” soil.

- **For plants purchased in containers**, carefully remove the pot and loosen the roots. Set the plant in the hole so the soil level of the plant is even with the surrounding ground. Use the soil you prepared to refill the hole. (It is advisable to place the base of the plant slightly higher than the surrounding soil, as the plant will usually settle slightly.)

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- **For bareroot plants**, set the plant in the hole so the top of the crown of the plant is 2 inches below the soil level. Use the soil you prepared to refill the hole.

Training

Clematis is one of the few climbing plants which does not harm the structures it climbs upon. It gently twines around for support but never clings. A clematis can be wound around and trained onto almost any sturdy support. Just tie it securely so it does not sway in the wind; however, do not tie the vines so tightly as to cut into them. It is best to train clematis when it is young as the older stems are quite brittle. Once your vines are trained onto a main support, you can allow them to cascade freely and beautifully.

Fertilizing

Apply about a tablespoonful of lime annually. Feed in the spring and midsummer with a good organic garden fertilizer for flowering plants. A mulch of dehydrated cow manure should be applied in late fall after the plant is dormant to provide adequate winter protection. Gently work the manure into the first inch or so of the soil early the next spring.

Pruning

The first spring after planting, prune clematis vines to about 8 to 10 inches from the ground, and continue to pinch the tips of the new growth in late spring and early summer to induce branching. Pinching will create a bushy, sturdy plant.

Different clematis varieties require different pruning techniques after the first year. When purchasing your clematis, make note of its pruning requirements.



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