

Clematis: A Lovely Vine to Bloom and Twine

Well-behaved in a small garden and floriferous enough to be featured in a larger landscape without getting lost, clematis deserves its nickname, “Queen of the Vines.” There are around 200 species native around the world and over 1000 cultivars, offering a variety of flower shape and color, vine height, and time of flowering.

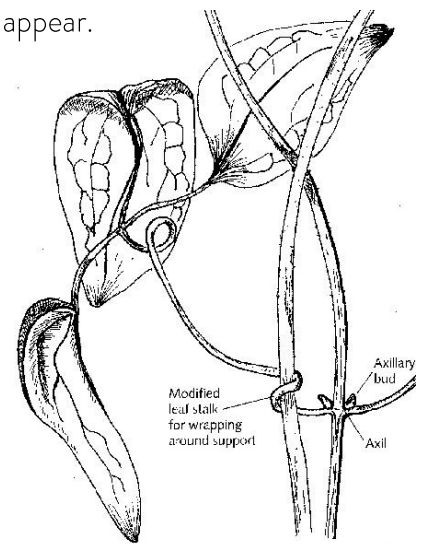
- Full sun promotes the best flowering, but afternoon shade is advisable for the hot and humid summers of St. Louis.
- Rich, medium moist, well-drained soils are preferred, so clematis will need supplemental watering during dry spells.
- Dig the bed deeply and amend with *Surface* and *Dr. Earth Motherland* compost to improve drainage.
- Cut off the nursery support or trellis rather than trying to untangle the plant. Prune out any bent or broken stems.
- Plant the clematis crown (top of the rootball) at least 2½” below the soil level. This will ensure vigorous new stem growth and allow more roots to develop and anchor the plant.
- While their flowers and foliage love the sun, their roots should be kept cool. Plant low perennials or groundcovers to provide shade for the root zone or maintain consistent coverage with hardwood mulch at about 2”-3” deep.

First Pruning

- Pruning begins for newly planted clematis in the 2nd or 3rd season. In early March, cut or pinch back each stem to strong new leaf-axil buds at around 12”-18” from the ground. New side shoots will appear.
- Two to three weeks later, pinch terminal buds of stems that have developed from these side shoots. Continue this practice every two weeks, spreading the branches out until the vine has filled the trellis.
- In later years, merely thin out old and dead branches each spring
- For more uniform bloom coverage, discern which group your clematis falls into and adjust your pruning with the following slight differences:

Pruning by Groups

- Group 1 – flowers only on old wood
 - pruning may not be necessary, but it is best to prune after flowering
 - the new growth that appears after pruning will produce next year’s flowers
- Group 2 – flowers on old AND new wood
 - only light pruning is needed in order to leave some mature stems from the previous season
 - in early spring, prune down to *highest* strong pair of leaf-axil buds, staggering stem heights from about 10” up
 - spread out new growth over the trellis, training it to fill
- Group 3 – flowers only on new wood
 - in early spring prune *all* stems down to around 8” from the ground, spreading out new growth over the trellis
 - this technique is the same as for newly planted clematis



Parts of a typical clematis
Drawing by E. Leeds



A Few Choices : Listed by Size

<i>Clematis</i> 'Saphyra Indigo'	1.5-2' x 2-3'	Group 3	Late, small-flowering, shrub
<i>Clematis</i> 'Bernardine'	3-4' x 1-2'	Group 3	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Corinne'	4-5' x 2-3'	Group 2	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Giselle'	4-5' x 2-3'	Group 3	Late, reblooming
<i>Clematis</i> 'Rooguchi'	4-8' x 2-3'	Group 3	Early, bell-shaped
<i>Clematis</i> 'Crystal Fountain'	5-6.5' x 2-3'	Group 2	Late, large-flowering, reblooming
<i>Clematis</i> 'Anita'	6-15' x 2-3'	Group 3	Late, small-flowering
<i>Clematis alpina</i> 'Pink Flamingo'	6.5-13' x 2-3'	Group 1	Early, reblooming, bell-shaped
<i>Clematis</i> 'Doctor Ruppel'	7-9' x 2-3'	Group 2	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Fireflame'	7-9' x 2-3'	Group 2	Early, reblooming, double?
<i>Clematis</i> 'Bonanza'	7-10' x 2-3'	Group 3	Late, small-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Hagley Hybrid'	7-10' x 3-4'	Group 3	Late, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Kardinal Wyszyński'	8-10' x 2-3'	Group 2	Late, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Henryi'	8-10' x 2-3'	Group 2	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'H.F. Young'	8-12' x 2-3'	Group 2	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis</i> 'Warsaw Nike'	8-13' x 2-3'	Group 3	Early, large-flowering
<i>Clematis montana</i> 'Mayleen'	20-30' x 8-10'	Group 1	Early, small-flowering, fragrant
<i>Clematis montana grandiflora</i>	25-40' x 25-40'	Group 1	Early, small-flowering, fragrant