

## CLEMATIS

Because of the great interest in Clematis, both in Europe and in Canada, many excellent ornamental varieties have been produced. The most popular groups in Canada are hybrids (as well as some species) of *C. lanuginosa*, *C. Jackmanii*, *C. viticella*, *C. florida* and especially *C. patens*. All of these are large-flowering hybrids of the widest range of colour, many bloom a second and even a third time if handled properly.

### PLANTING

Be careful not to twist or break the stem base where the roots are attached. Clematis are planted with the crown 3 to 4 inches below the soil surface. This allows the plant to recover from any frost damage or wilt. Allow adequate spacing for roots to develop and keep at least an 8 - 10" planting distance from any wall. Tilt the plant, including its stake towards the support structure it will be attaching itself to as it is important to lead the vine against this structure to ensure that it climbs in the direction you intend it to. Initially, space the stems in a fan shape to create uniform structure and to prevent overcrowding of branches. Attach these stems with loose plant ties, in a figure eight form, to prevent topping over from strong winds. Most important of all is to protect this area from direct sun, that is, the bottom three inches of the stem after it is planted. Use mulch or a shaded shelter (like a bed of annuals) to keep out direct hot sunshine, Clematis prefer 'shaded, cool feet' and a 'sunny, warm top' and it is this area that most people neglect. Given proper shade here, a moderate amount of moisture and the proper soil, the plants should thrive. Give your plants a slow, deep watering once a week to encourage strong, deep, root development. If they can be brought through the first 90 days satisfactorily, their chances of survival are excellent!

### LOCATION

The light requirements range depending on the variety. Most prefer full sun, but there are varieties which tolerate relatively lower light conditions (North facing exposure). Clematis prefer well-drained loam soil that is treated with lime and soluble fertilizer such as 20-20-20. Clematis prefer rich, organic, well-drained soil. Adding sand or gravel mixed with soil at the base of the planting hole will ensure proper drainage. A proper planting hole for clematis is 2 feet deep and 12 inches wide. The soil should have some perlite (or vermiculite) and peat moss mixed with it.

### PRUNING

There are **three** main groups of clematis categorized by their pruning needs.

#### GROUP ONE

The early-spring bloomers, that depend on last year's wood to bloom, are pruned immediately after they've finished blooming. Prune any dead, broken or decayed branching at this time.

#### GROUP TWO

The May to August bloomers produce flowers on previous year's stems and on this year's growth. In early spring remove all dead and weak branching and cut 1/3 of the remainder of the stems back to a set of swelling buds.

#### GROUP THREE

The late bloomers must be pruned ruthlessly each March. This group flowers on this season's growth. To ensure the greatest blooming potential, prune back hard to swelling, live buds approximately 30 cm above ground level.

Pruning to encourage longer bloom time can be done on several clematis varieties. When new growth reaches 2 to 2-1/2 feet in height, pinch off less than half the number of growing tips on the elongating vine. This causes a second crop of flowers to be produced three to four weeks after the first bloom has gone by.

### CLIMBING SUPPORTS

Finally, since most of them are climbing plants, they should be given something to attach themselves to. They do not twine, but climb by attaching their leaf petioles around some means of support, like a thin trellis, bamboo stake, chain link fence or garden netting. The support that you select should be kept at least an inch from any wall. If a lattice is used, the openings should be no more than 9 inches wide.

### PROPAGATION

Clematis can be propagated by internode cuttings (cuttings taken between buds) of soft wood taken early in the year. Layering is easier for gardeners, preferably into sunken pots because clematis do not move well from the open ground. The species can be raised from seed. Seed from hybrids will not produce replicas of the parent plant nor, as a rule, their equal, but gardeners have raised outstanding plants this way and most gardeners feel a special affection for a plant they have raised from seed.