



KENNEDY'S COUNTRY GARDENS

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Clematis Tips

Clematis have some of the most beautiful flowers of any hardy plant in New England. The plants can be stunning in bloom. However, Clematis are known to be finicky plants. Even experienced gardeners can have trouble growing Clematis. Others leave them alone and have great results. Here are some tips:

For best results plant Clematis in a sunny location with well-drained soil. Clematis prefer a cool root system. Plant a low or medium-size perennial at the base of the vine to shade the soil and keep the soil and root system from becoming too hot in the summer.

Add lime to the soil at time of planting. Clematis prefer a "sweet" or alkaline soil. Check soil pH to be sure. When liming the lawn every spring or fall, take a handful out of the spreader and sprinkle around the soil surface of your Clematis. This will help maintain the pH.

Watch out for disease. Prune out any diseased branches. Stake and fasten the branches as they grow. When they flop over, the branches will bend and crimp. This often is the downfall of Clematis and can lead to disease issues. Handle them carefully.

Pruning Clematis:

As a rule Clematis are often categorized in three groups.

Group one consists of the early flowering varieties. These Clematis usually form their flowers buds the previous season. Therefore any pruning should be done after they finish flowering in late spring. At this time remove dead and weak stems and it is okay to cut back any growth that is growing outside the bounds you set for the plant. With some varieties, this light pruning may encourage a second wave of flowers.

Group two are mostly the mid-season flowering types. All dead & weak stems should be removed in late winter or early spring and the remaining stems should be cut back to about have the size the plant was last year. Try to alternate where you prune each stem so it does appear too uniform. This will stimulate spring or early summer flowers.

Group three includes most summer and fall flowering Clematis. This group performs best with a hard pruning. It is safe to prune this group to about 12-30" from the ground. For best results, do this pruning in late winter or early spring. Some gardeners prefer to do this in the late fall give the plant a "cleaner" appearance. Fall pruning is okay, but the plant does not have time to "heel" from the cuts, so be prepared for additional winter dieback.

Information compiled and written by Chris Kennedy, MCH of Kennedy's Country Gardens