

Hardening off

At Thorncroft we grow under glass, so Clematis purchased during winter through to May, must be hardened off before planting. Stand the plant outside in a sheltered position during the day but take into unheated cover

overnight. An unheated greenhouse, conservatory or even a garage will be sufficient to prevent frost damage to the soft growth. The process should be continued for about two to three weeks before planting.

Planting in the Garden

The key to successful clematis growing is careful attention to the planting and soil improvement.

To start with water the clematis thoroughly, let it soak in a bucket of water while you prepare the hole.

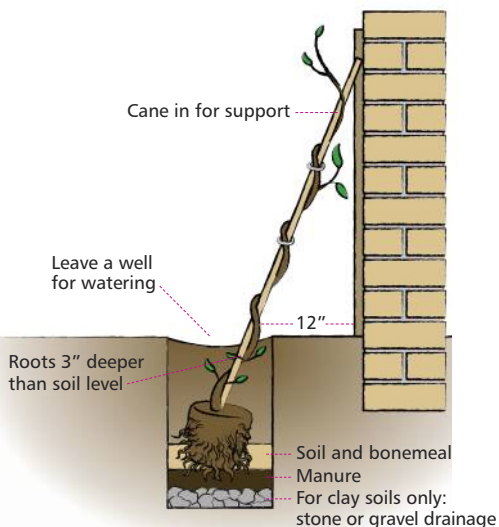
The hole should be dug away from the base of the support your clematis will grow on to avoid the root being too dry. If planting by a tree or shrub the same distance should be used and planting on the north or shady side.

Whether your soil is heavy or light, acid or alkaline, it should be improved before planting. Clematis typically like a rich soil with good nutrient levels but with a free draining nature to avoid waterlogging.

Dig the planting hole to around 18" (45cm) diameter and depth and break up the soil in the bottom of the planting hole with a fork before you incorporate rotted garden compost and manure. Make sure manure is well rotted and not still steaming or hot and cover with about 2" of soil with bonemeal incorporated in it.

Remove the pot so you can gently loosen the roots, carefully place the plant into the hole making sure that the root ball is buried about 3" (8cm) deeper than it was in its pot. Now re-fill the hole with soil, firming down by hand and water in.

If your clematis is planted in a hot position, where the base of the plant will be baked by the sun for a large part of the day, place bark chippings or mulch around the base to provide shade for the root system. This will help to keep the roots cool and moist avoiding the need to water so often.



Growing Clematis in Containers

Choose a large container, preferably terracotta not plastic, at least 18"(45cm) deep with adequate drainage holes.

Put plenty of crocks, stones or gravel in the bottom to ensure good drainage and stand the container on feet or bricks to stop the drainage holes becoming blocked.

For potting compost we would recommend using $\frac{3}{4}$ John Innes No.3 mixed with $\frac{1}{4}$ multi-purpose compost. Check regularly for watering needs – Do NOT keep container grown clematis too wet over the winter, and ensure the pot is draining freely!



For the best flowering results, we recommend using liquid tomato feed around every two weeks from late spring to early autumn. At pruning time remove an inch or two of compost from the top of the pot and replace with fresh compost to which a single handful of bonemeal has been added, and water in.

Every four to five years root pruning may be necessary. At pruning time when the plant is dormant cut away 2" - 3" of root from the outside of the root-ball. Cut one third off the bottom, and re-pot.

For the best clematis for growing in pots, visit the Patio Pots section of our website.

Pruning Your New Clematis

We strongly recommend that you hard prune all clematis sometime within the first year of planting, because it encourages your clematis to put its roots out to form a strong root system. It also encourages new shoots low down creating a bushy plant and reduces the number of tall stems and foliage the young root system must sustain.

So when do I do this hard prune?

- **For Tidy Prune** clematis, it should be carried out immediately after the first year's flowering has finished.

- **For Light and Hard Prune** clematis, it should be carried out during February or March the first year after planting.

After the first year simply follow the pruning method for established clematis below.

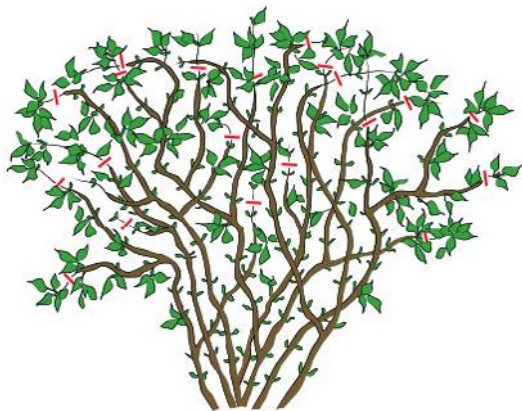
How to Prune Your Established Clematis

Tidy after flowering - Pruning Group 1

Armandii, Atragene, Cirrhosa, Forsteri, Montana Groups and other Evergreen clematis

These cultivars simply need a good 'tidy up' each year immediately after flowering has finished. Prune off unwanted growth then tie the remainder to its support. Train some long new growths down to cover up bare lower stems.

If you wish to keep them more compact, light prune after flowering (see Light Pruning below). This will prevent the montana's from getting out of control and will help prevent others from getting a woody structure at the base. Sometimes it is necessary to prune vigorous Montana's very hard to remove a thick 'Thatch', only cut into growth where you can see leaves or flowers growing. This should also be done after flowering.



Light Pruning - Pruning Group 2

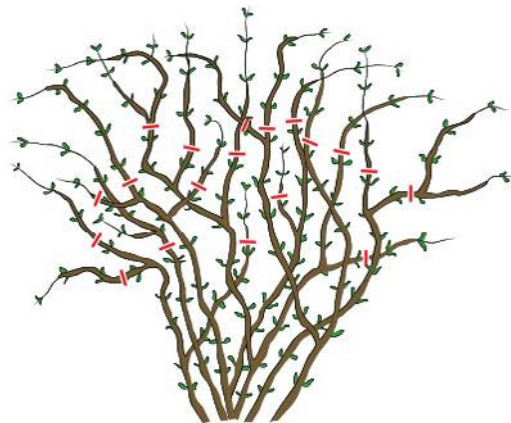
Early Large Flowered Cultivars

Light pruning should be carried out during late February or March each year. You may find the Light prune clematis develop a 'birds nest' at the top of the plant. If this is the case, in mid-February reduce all stems down by about one quarter and then follow the guide below.

Prune the stems working from the top downwards looking for viable buds or shoots. These shoots may be apparent at differing heights on each stem, some may be low to the soil level and that is fine because the plant will re-shoot and flower all the way up, generally looking much neater.

A complete hard prune may be necessary every few years and can help to rejuvenate an old, tired plant.

Dead-Heading Clematis - Clematis from light prune group benefit from dead-heading after the early flowers have finished. Apply liquid tomato feed every two weeks after dead-heading, this will encourage new flowering growth to form and another good display of blooms can be enjoyed in late summer and early autumn.



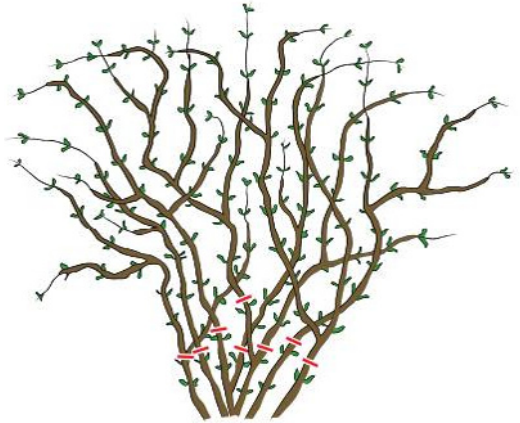
Hard Pruning - Pruning Group 3

Late Large Flowered Cultivars, Flammula, Florida, Tangutica, Texensis, Viticella Groups and species clematis

Hard pruning is not hard at all!! It is carried out during late February or March.

Working from the soil upwards, prune all growth back to the second set of viable buds in the leaf joints, this should be approx. 6"- 18"(15-45cm) from soil level. If they are shooting much higher up the stems you will have to prune off at 18" regardless and come back after a week or two to tidy up any remaining dead growth above the new shoots.

If you prefer to tidy up your Hard prune clematis in late autumn or early winter, I recommend you roughly prune to waist height and tie the remaining stems to the support to prevent damage in a windy situation. The final hard prune can then be carried out as above.



How to Prune Herbaceous Clematis

Your herbaceous clematis can be pruned just like other herbaceous plants in the garden, however do not hard prune the Heracleifolia Group until April when the weather has improved as they over-winter much better with their old growth left intact.

Completely dead stems on some herbaceous clematis such as the Integrifolia and Diversifolia Groups can be cut to 3" (8cm) in February to March, take care to avoid nipping off the new shoots as they are emerging from the ground

Feeding

Clematis will benefit a great deal from an annual mulch of manure or rotted compost during the autumn or spring. This will hold in moisture & provide excellent nutrient for the plant over a long period of time. Bagged manure is fine & loose manure should be left to rot & cool before use & don't put it too close to the stems of the plant.

The following guide will be sufficient feeding for a whole season.

In February apply a good single handful of bonemeal and work it gently into the soil around the base of the plant, a short distance from the stems, then add 5 slow release fertiliser tablets & water in.

During March use a large handful of Magnesium salts and apply it to the soil around the base of the stems in a similar manner to bonemeal & lightly water in.

Lastly in late April a single handful of Sulphate of Potash can be applied and again around the stems and lightly watered in. For early large flowered clematis you can give a second application when dead-heading the first blooms.

As an alternative to the Sulphate of Potash, you may use liquid tomato feed once a fortnight from April until mid-September.

We understand that having all the right feeds for your plants is difficult and trying to find them on the high-street can also be hard, so to make life easier we stock a comprehensive selection of Care Packs.

A 'Care Pack for Flowers' includes all you need or you may prefer the 'Care Pack for Pruning' which includes stainless steel clematis pruning scissors.



We have a great selection of Care Packs available on our website:

www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk

Deliveries can be arranged all year round subject to availability

Growing Advice For Groups Of Clematis

Fine Rooted

Atragene, Heracleifolia, Flammula, Tangutica Groups & also, rehderiana & others that require free draining soil conditions.

All these clematis have very fine root systems & will not thrive in heavy soil, which is prone to water-logging. They will actually be happier in poorer soils with very free draining conditions.

If you have a heavy clay soil then drainage improvement will be a key factor in achieving success with these types of clematis. Consider incorporating horticultural grit into the planting mixture and a good deep hole with crock in the bottom to act like a 'sump' so the root does not sit in the wet.

Evergreens

Armandii, Cirrhosa & Forsteri Groups, plus napaulensis & 'Winter Beauty'.

These clematis prefer the shelter of a wall or sturdy fence & somewhere we can ensure the soil is very free draining.

Evergreen clematis have a natural dormant period which is around mid-summer when they can look 'tired'. In extreme heat, cirrhosa type clematis may drop their leaves and napaulensis does so every summer to help it survive the heat. Do not water too much at this time as they are dormant!

Forsteri Group

In the UK climate, we recommend that you grow all the clematis in this group in very free draining soil or containers & give them the benefit of some winter protection if possible. The compost for containers should be very free draining & mixing in a few handfuls of horticultural grit or perlite will help. Make sure the pot can drain freely & reduce watering in the autumn because they over-winter better if slightly dry. Try growing male and female plants from the Forsteri group together to get nice seed-heads.

The Florida Group

When planting florida clematis in the garden they will require the shelter of a south or south – west facing wall, with good free draining soil & some winter protection. A sheet of bubble plastic or a double layer of garden fleece draped across & pegged into position will keep the worst of the winter weather at bay. This can be removed during early March so that hard pruning can be carried out.

We more commonly recommend growing Florida group clematis in large pots as a feature plant. They can be kept outside from around February to October before being moved it into a glasshouse or conservatory to over-winter, or to a sheltered corner of the garden out of the worst of the weather.

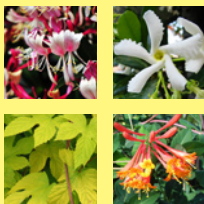
Sometimes by taking them undercover during the winter they continue flowering & during January may begin into new growth. If this happens in early March you will still need to prune the previous season's growth as they still benefit from being hard pruned.

When in a container inside a glasshouse we must avoid keeping the clematis too wet over the winter, on the other hand they must not be allowed to dry out completely. Always ensure the pot drains freely and harden the plants off each year if you have had them inside, as described at the start of this leaflet.

From mid-April a liquid feed of Tomato fertiliser every two weeks is beneficial however this should be stopped at the end of August as the weather deteriorates & the pot is once again returned to its winter quarters in late September.

For further cultural hints see our website for full details of how to treat each group of clematis:

www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk



Have you discovered our range of Companion Climbers?

We stock a great range of other climbers and wall shrubs to compliment your clematis. Check out the full range online, look for Companion Climbers.

www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk