



## Care Guide - "Planting is the key to success"

### Hardening off

Clematis purchased during winter through to April, 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 weeks** before planting.

### Planting in the Garden

The key to successful clematis growing is careful attention to the planting & soil improvement. To start with water the clematis thoroughly before planting, let it soak in a bucket of water while you prepare the hole.

- If planting by a wall or fence - the hole should be dug away from the base of the wall or fence to avoid the root being to dry.
- If planting by a tree or shrub - plant a short distance from the main stem, leaning the cane of the clematis towards the host plant.

Whether you soil is heavy or light, acid or alkaline, it should be improved before planting.

### Method

1. Dig the planting hole much bigger & deeper than the size of the flower pot it is purchased in. 18" (45cm) diameter & depth is ideal.
2. Break up the soil in the bottom of the planting hole with a fork, then incorporate rotted garden compost or manure. Make sure manure is well rotted & not still steaming or hot then cover with at about 2" of soil.
3. Sprinkle one good single handful of bonemeal into the hole & mix into the loosened soil.
4. Remove the plastic ties on the plant which might eventually be covered with soil.
5. Remove the pot – **Please handle the plant carefully to avoid damaging the stems of the clematis.** Now carefully loosen the roots if they are in a tight ball.
6. **IMPORTANT** Place the plant carefully in the hole making sure that the root ball is buried about **3" (8cm) deeper** than it was in its pot & re-fill with soil, firming down by hand.
7. Using the remaining water from your bucket, water thoroughly.
8. 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 & 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 & stand the container on feet or bricks to stop the drainage holes becoming blocked.

We would recommend using  $\frac{3}{4}$  John Innes No.3 mixed with  $\frac{1}{4}$  multi-purpose compost. Plant the clematis as described from point 4 above.

Check regularly for watering needs – Do NOT keep container grown clematis too wet over the winter, & ensure the pot is draining freely!

At pruning time 'top dress' by removing loose compost from the top of the pot & replace with fresh compost to which a single handful of bonemeal has been added, & water in.

## **Pruning - New Clematis**

We strongly recommend that you hard prune all clematis sometime within the first year of planting. Doing this will encourage your clematis to form a strong root system, new shoots to form in the leaf axils & it will reduce the amount of foliage the young root system has to sustain.

Many nurseries will suggest this hard prune is done on planting but we would suggest this;

**For Tidy** (Group 1) this is carried out immediately after the first flowering has finished. Just cut the plant back by half of its existing height, this is sufficient for these types.

**For Light** (Group 2) a proper hard prune is carried out during February/March the first year after planting.

**For Hard** (Group 3) these will be hard pruned every February / March.

## **Pruning - Established Clematis**

**Tidy after flowering - Group 1** (Armandii, Atragene, Cirrhosa, Forsteri, Montana & Evergreens)

These cultivars simply need a good 'tidy up' each year immediately after flowering has finished.

This will prevent the montana type clematis from getting out of control & will help prevent others from getting a woody structure at the base.

Prune to a healthy set of leaf joints or a point where leaf & flower is present & the plant will re-grow ready to flower the next year. Tie in the new shoots to keep it neat & tidy.

**Light Pruning - Group 2** (Early Large Flowered Cultivars)

Light pruning should be carried out during late February or March each year.

Start at the top of the plant & reduce all stems down by about one third, removing the typical 'birds nest' effect at the top. Prune the remaining stems at differing heights looking for 'viable' buds.

Some can be cut as low as 6" (15cm) to encourage young growth right from soil level, this helps to keep the plant flowering all the way up & generally look much neater.

A hard prune may be necessary every 5 - 6 years to help rejuvenate old or tired clematis. When planning to carry this out we would recommend pruning the clematis back by half during autumn or winter, which will help the plant reshoot low down when you then hard prune in spring.

**Dead-heading** - These clematis will benefit from deadheading the early flowers to enhance the second flowering.

**Hard Pruning - Group 3** (Late Flowering, Flammula, Florida, Tangutica, Texensis, Viticella)

Hard pruning is normally carried out during late February or March.

Prune all growth back to a good set of viable buds in the leaf joints, approx. 6"- 18"(15-45cm) from soil level.

If you prefer to tidy your clematis in late autumn or early winter, cut them back by half & tie in the remaining stems to prevent damage in a wind, then in late winter or early spring a full hard prune can be carried out. It is always safer to leave a bit of extra growth on the clematis over the winter period & not prune too hard too soon.

**Optional Pruning - (Light OR Hard)**

These clematis are very versatile & you can choose which pruning type suits your garden situation better. We would recommend you start with hard prune to see how the plant performs, then you can choose whether to **light or hard** prune these cultivars in future.

**Herbaceous Clematis** (Diversifolia, Heracleifolia, Integerifolia & some Flammula)

**Do not** hard prune the herbaceous **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 cultivars such as the **Integerifolia & Diversifolia Groups** can be cut almost to soil level (3"/ 8cm) in late winter or early spring, simply 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 from the list above or you may prefer the 'Care Pack for Pruning' which includes stainless steel clematis pruning scissors.

For more details call the nursery, visit the website or see our catalogue.

## **Clematis Wilt**

Increasingly we find that true clematis wilt is in decline which is wonderful news for us and you the gardener. Today more often than not what you are seeing is physical damage of some type or other, often caused by slugs or snails stripping the 'bark' on the lower stems. Cut out damaged stems, they will re-shoot and grow happily again providing the slugs have been dealt with!

Wilt infection most commonly affects the whole of a plant and happens very quickly, often over just a day. Affected plants need to be cut down to just above the first set of leaf joints from the ground, this will encourage fresh growth to shoot from below soil level. The soil surrounding the roots must then be drenched with fungicide - we recommend using a general systemic fungicide available from garden centres. Drench twice, 1-2 weeks apart and you should have dealt the infection a fatal blow.

## **Cultural Information**

The following paragraphs are additional guidance for certain groups and will help you get the best out of your plants.

**Tips** for: 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.

**Tips** for: Evergreen Clematis like *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 ideally 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.

### **Tips** for 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 commonly recommend growing Florida group clematis in large pots as a feature plant.**

Stand the container outside from late February to early October & then move it into a cold glasshouse or conservatory to over-winter, or to a sheltered corner of the garden out of the worst of the weather. They will not need heated conditions.

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.

Avoid keeping the Florida group 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 over the winter, as described at the start of this leaflet.

From mid April a fortnightly liquid feed of Tomato fertiliser 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.

For further cultural hints see our website and full printed catalogue for full details of how to treat each group of clematis.

### **Further Care Assistance**

We now offer a range of Care Packs via our mail order service which cover all your clematis needs. Care Pack for Flowers, Care Pack for Planting, Care Pack for Pruning and the Care Pack Deluxe! Also available, our favourite Barnet Stainless Steel pruning scissors which we have used at Thorncroft for over 25 years, much easier to use on clematis than secateurs.

We are always delighted to take your calls for advice and we only ask that you are patient during busy times of year, we are a small team and can't always have the telephone to hand but if you leave a message we **always call back!**

We are always happy to offer advice on clematis purchased from us.

**Happy Gardening!!!**