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How to Grow a Clematis Vine



Photo Credit: Peter Kvasnicak/Shutterstock

Botanical Name: *Clematis spp.*

Plant Type: [Vine](#)

Sun Exposure: [Full Sun](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Pruning Clematises

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 16, 2025



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Clematis, known as the “queen of the vines,” may be best known for its large-flowering, purple, star-shaped blooms on twining vines. Learn how and when to plant clematis—plus clematis care tips and advice on how to propagate this long-lived perennial plant—which will bloom for generations!

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About Clematis

There are more than 300 species and hundreds of hybrids of clematis. Most clematis are woody, deciduous vines, while others are shrub or trailing types. Some species bloom in spring; others in mid- to late summer. Most clematis are hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 4 to 8 and native to North America.

The blooms are spectacular, with some flowers reaching up to 10 inches across! These showy flowers in the form of saucers, bells, tubes, tulips, open bells, doubles, and semi-doubles. The flowers are usually in the cool shades of purple or pink, though they come in a stunning array of tones, including blue, white, magenta, yellow, and bicolor. Also, many clematis varieties are scented. (The most fragrant species is the tender *C. armandii*.)

Clematises appreciate a trellis, post, or stationary structure to climb; without something, the vine will sprawl, including over the ground. Hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies love their blooms.

Read Next

- [Having a Vine Time with Perennial Vines](#)
- [Clematis Varieties: From Climbing Vines to Bush Types](#)
- [How to Grow Jasmine: The Complete Jasmine Flower Guide](#)

PLANTING

Clematis thrives in full sun—at least 6 hours a day for good bloom. However, the sensitive roots cannot take the heat; keep plant roots moist and cool with mulch, low-growing plants, and groundcover. Soil must be loose, and well-draining with a neutral pH. Prior to planting, mix in compost or aged manure, plus a few handfuls of bonemeal.

When to Plant Clematis

- Planting in the cool spring is generally more successful than fall planting.
- Plant potted clematis anytime after the last spring frost and before fall's first one.

- Dig a planting hole that's about 2 to 3 times the width of the root ball and a few inches deeper. To stay cool, the crown (the part of the plant where the stem and roots meet) should be about 4 inches below the soil surface. This will encourage branching and stem development underground.
- Fill in with soil, water thoroughly, and mulch to keep the roots cool and minimize weeds.
- Place the climbing structure, if using.



GROWING

Keep the soil moist during the first year by watering weekly. So, do not let the soil dry out. In colder regions, add extra mulch around the plant in late fall to protect the roots. Once the plant is in the ground, don't disturb or move it.

- In spring, fertilize with a liquid seaweed or fish emulsion. In subsequent years, fertilize with a balanced, all-purpose (5-10-5) fertilizer.
- Each spring spread compost around the plant (away from the stems).
- In spring, prune dead wood back, cutting above new, emerging buds.
- On older plants, remove any stems that are 4 years old or older.

Pruning Clematis

Prune clematis to promote flowering. There are three different kinds of clematis, and you need to determine which kind you have before you prune. Woody-stemmed types like the *Clematis Montana* bloom early on last year's stems. Prune plants after flowering to remove deadwood. Clematises belong to one of three

groups based on flower size and bloom time.

Group 1: Woody-stemmed types bloom on last year's stems. Flowers appear in early to mid-spring. Prune after flowering, if desired, to remove deadwood. Examples include: *C. armandii*, *C. alpine*, *C. cirrhosis*, *C. macropetula*, and *C. montana*.

Group 2: Double and semidouble flowers should also be pruned as above. They may bloom twice: in May/June on last year's wood and later in the year on new shoots. But prune after spring flowers fade; remove dead wood in late winter. Examples include hybrids: 'Miss Bateman', Lake Sondersborough, 'Nelly Moser', 'Henry', 'Marie Boisselot', and 'Elsa Spath'.

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Group 3: Large, showy flowers that bloom in summer and autumn are on current year's growth. Prune severely in late winter/early spring, leaving two pairs of buds on each stem. Common varieties include *C. viticella*, *C. recta*, and *C. x jackmanii*.

See our complete post on [pruning your clematis](#).

Propagating Clematis

Seed, softwood cuttings, and division are three ways to propagate clematis.

By seed, we mean saving seeds in the fall once they're ripe. Clematis seeds need a cold period, as they would outdoors in nature. Store in the fridge for a few months. Then, once the temperature is 70 degrees, plant directly in the ground. Or, plant in small pots in moist media under bright light until the seeds germinate.

Once the seedlings germinate and are big

inch pots or the ground after hardening off (gradually introducing them to the outdoors).

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Cuttings are the most common way to propagate. Choose a healthy shoot in late spring to early summer; it must be 2 to 3 inches long and include a fresh bud. Cut the stem at an angle above a set of leaves, then dip the end in rooting hormone and plant it into a small pot in soil. Keep leaves on. Water and place in indirect sunlight. Provide humidity by putting a plastic bag over cuttings, and also provide bottom heat of 55 to 60° F. Once your cutting has rooted, plant it in 4-inch pots or outside.

Dividing clematis is easy if you already have a large, established plant. Gently break up the roots, then place your divided plants back in the ground, as you would with any new plant.

Types

- *Clematis armandii*: the most fragrant species; clusters of large, star-shaped, vanilla-scented white flowers in spring; needs sturdy support
- *Clematis* 'Lincoln Star': large, deep pink blooms in late spring and late summer; 8 to 10 feet tall
- *Clematis* 'Elsa Spath': profuse, large, single, blue-purple flowers; blooms early and late summer; 8 to 12 feet tall
- *C. viticella* 'Betty Corning': light purple, bell-like flowers all season long; dies to the ground each winter, climbs up to 10 feet each spring; needs sturdy support
- *C. heracleifolia*: shrub form; small, blue, hyacinth-like flowers in late summer; dies back almost to ground in winter; gets about 4 feet tall and wide
- *C. tangutica*: profuse, bright yellow, bell-shaped flower from midsummer

heads; grows up to 3 feet a year; needs sturdy support

- C. 'Sweet Summer Love': profuse, fragrant, small, reddish-purple, star-shape flowers from July to October; grows to 12 feet; disease-resistant; very hardy to survive the toughest winters

[Visit our post on clematis varieties to see our favorites!](#)

HARVESTING

Clematises can make excellent cut flowers, although vining types can be challenging because of their short stems. Use these to fill out the bottom of the arrangement.

Shrubby or herbaceous types for cut flowers include *C. hexapetala*, *C. recta*, *C. heracleifolia*, and *C. integrifolia*.

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PESTS/DISEASES

The most serious disease is commonly called **clematis wilt**. It is a stem rot/leaf spot disease caused by a fungus. It mainly affects large-flowered clematis hybrids.

Diseases: Clematis is also susceptible to powdery mildew, rust, fungal leaf spot, and viruses.

Pests: Aphids, vine weevils, slugs/snails, scale insects, spider mites, and earwigs.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The name “clematis” comes from the ancient Greek word for a climbing vine, *klematis*.
- Clematis belongs to the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae).
- Wild clematises (*Clematis virginia*), aka old man’s beard, virgin’s bower, and devil’s darning needles, can grow 20 feet in 1 year.
- Centuries ago, Europeans used clematis vines to make baskets and fish traps.

VINES

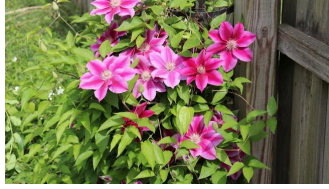
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it’s not surprising that she and The Old Farmer’s Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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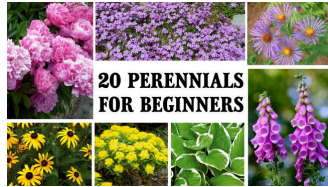
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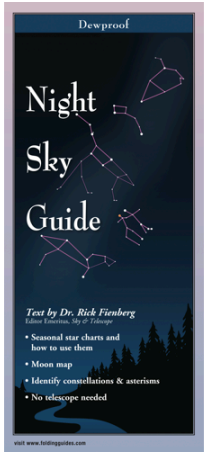
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Catherine Boeckmann 2 weeks ago

Great question, Sarah! Seed, soft-wood cuttings, and division are three ways to propagate clematis. We've added a section above for you and

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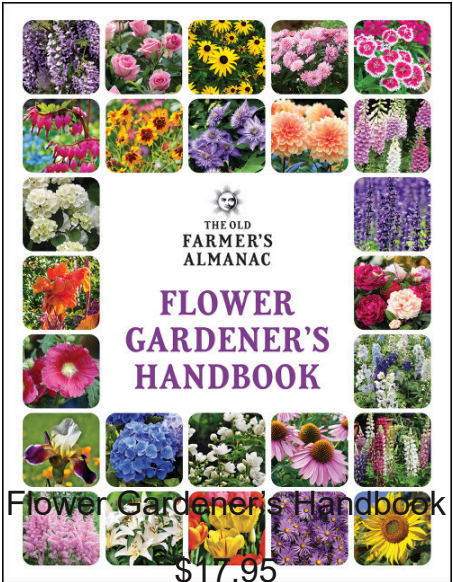
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