

Clematis Success - 7 Steps

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Sunday, February 01, 2009 - 17:45 - Last revised Wednesday, February 18, 2009

7 Steps to Clematis Success

1. **Know your vine:** Prune the correct way for your type of plant.
2. **Start with the Soil:** most clematis prefer slightly alkaline soil. A pH of 7 to 7.5 is fine. Dig a hole 18" deep and wide. Work in lots of moisture holding compost. Set young plants deeply so the first 2 sets of nodes will be underground. This encourages plants to send up more stems so you'll have a thicker plant.
3. **Mulching Matters:** "Head in the sun, feet in the shade" is old clematis advice. A 4" layer of mulch keeps the roots cool and moist just as well as the shade does. To prevent stem rot, keep the mulch about 8" from the stems.
4. **Making the Cut:** The best place to prune a stem is just above two strong buds. These buds then will develop into new vines
5. **Recognize Disease Quickly:** Clematis wilt is easy to spot: a portion of your vine wilts quickly, often just as the plant starts to bloom. Wilt is caused by a fungus that enters the stem, usually just above the soil line. There is no cure other than to cut the entire stem to the ground and dispose of it in the trash. Do this as soon as you notice wilt. Apply benomyl or carbendazim to vines immediately after you remove infected portions. Read the package label for specific application directions. The rest of the plant usually survives, providing there are enough healthy stems. Cultivars that have proven resistant to wilt include 'Ville de Lyon' and 'Jackmanii'.
6. **Serve a Balanced Diet:** Clematis like to be well fed, but not overfed. Feed it once a year right after pruning with an all-purpose, granulated fertilizer, such as a 10-10-10.
7. **Choose the Right Trellis:** Clematis climb by the twisting petioles, or leaf stems. The vine itself does not twine. So, if the structure is too large, the leaf can't wrap itself around it. Anything over 3/4 inch in diameter is too large for a leaf to grasp. Nylon fishing line is a great way to get a clematis to climb a light pole or arbor post. Tie a knot in the line every foot or so to keep the vine from sliding down.