

Following the care instructions as outlined, next year you can begin to enjoy your flowering clematis vines throughout the spring, summer, and fall. The vine itself is lightweight, not requiring as much support as a honeysuckle, grapes, or other vines. After the first year, it grows rapidly, often spreading 15 feet along a chain link fence or along a wall. Its uses are only limited by the imagination, and it is the perfect plant to lend a colorful hand in any garden.

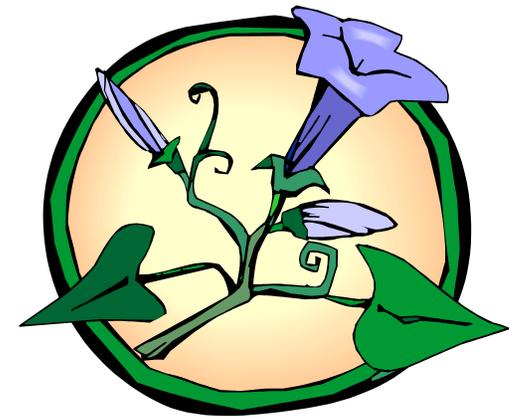
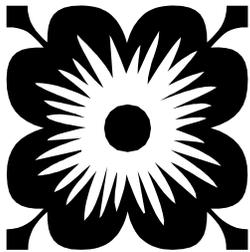


We at Bennett's are here every day to give "Helping Hand Hints" personally, one to one. Many gardening problems are very specific, and we couldn't possibly cover all aspects in these pamphlets. Any time you have a specific problem or need help, feel free to call. It's our job to help you be successful in your growing endeavors, and we thoroughly enjoy giving you a "helping hand."

## HELPING HAND HINTS

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## CLEMATIS

# CLEMATIS: QUEEN OF CLIMBERS

Few perennials have the ability to transform the mundane into the magical the way clematis do. These wonderful vines offer many unique qualities that are both dependable and versatile. Clematis are flowering vines or perennial shrubs that are most noted for their exceptional flowering. Bloom periods range from 4 weeks to several months depending on variety. When planting clematis along a border or in groupings, you can enjoy a full range of white, pink, red, purple, or blue flowers from May through October.

There are many factors affecting how clematis do their first year as well as future years. These include location selected for planting, method of planting as well as watering, fertilization, pruning and winter protection.

## LOCATION

Clematis plants prefer to be planted in the spring in a location providing 5-6 hours of sunlight for optimum growth. The east side of a building or a shaded south or west location is recommended. A full direct sun location would not be best unless the lower part of the vine and root zone is shaded. Keeping the roots of the clematis cool is extremely important. Mulching or developing an annual or groundcover bed below the vine can achieve this. Clematis roots grow long and deep and require a well-drained, rich soil. Be sure to avoid extremely wet locations.

## SUPPORT

Clematis can be grown almost anywhere, on walls, arbors, fences and on light posts. They are not self-clinging and will not harm walls or painted surfaces. They climb by twining around supports such as trelliswork, fencing or wires. At Bennett's we recommend 1-2' of support and protection for the vine the first year. Wire fencing or stakes can achieve this.

## PLANTING

Planting your clematis is the most important step for success. The hole should be dug at least 2' wide and 2' deep. The soil should be thoroughly worked with 1 part sphagnum peat moss to 1 part soil. Backfill the hole with the peat/soil mix leaving just enough space for the new plant's soil to be level with the existing soil, don't plant too deeply. Add 1/2 cupful of lime to the hole and mix thoroughly. Tamp the soil lightly. Remove the pre-moistened plant from the pot with a quick tap. Place the plant in the hole and backfill half way with the soil mix, tamping lightly. Fill the hole with water and allow it to drain. Backfill remaining hole with soil mix. (DO NOT TAMP) Water thoroughly again to insure soil is settled around roots. Apply a 2-3" mulch covering of shredded bark or peat moss to planting area and water thoroughly.

## WATERING

It is very important to keep plants watered well during the first season of growth. Water thoroughly every 3-4 days the first 2 weeks. After that, water to supplement normal rainfall to equal 1" of water per week. During the following years, water to supplement rainfall through hot, dry months.

## FERTILIZATION

Clematis need fertilizer for strong foliage growth and good root development. Fertilizer will also promote blossoms and keep them lasting longer. We suggest you fertilize throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Use either a water-soluble fertilizer, such as Miracle Gro, every other time you water or a granular garden-type fertilizer as a top dressing once a month. Clematis prefer a slightly sweet soil therefore they will benefit from 1/2 cupful of lime twice a year.

## PRUNING

The first spring and summer, it is important to help the plant develop correctly by pruning. Keep the plant approximately 18-24" tall by pinching the growing tips to induce branches and better root development. The more you prune the first year the better the future of your plant.

In future years, whether to prune or not to prune can be determined by finding your variety noted on the supplemental listing. The hard pruning varieties should be cut back every year as they produce flowers on new growth only. These specific varieties should be pruned when dormant in the fall or early spring when the buds are just beginning to swell. Hard pruning means cutting the plant back to the lowest pair of buds on each stem (6-13"). Optional pruning applies to varieties that flower on old and new wood. If you want larger early flowers, do not prune. If you want more numerous medium flowers in the summer, prune hard.

If your non-pruning variety needs pruning and shaping, the best time is a month after they flower. All clematis will require some thinning as they grow older. Prune out dead wood and excessive overgrowth as necessary. Avoid damaging good live wood.

## WINTER PROTECTION

As winter approaches, clematis will benefit from a fresh supply of mulch over the root zone. This helps insure that the roots won't become exposed as the ground freezes and thaws. Be sure to water thoroughly before mulching.