



CARING FOR CLEMATIS

by Sue McDavid

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If ever there was a queen of climbers, Clematis would be that queen. This fabulous vining plant can be trained to climb trellises, fences or arches over doorways. It has incredible flowers ranging in size from huge to more profuse, smaller ones in various colors. The vines of Clematis twist and curl to hold the plant onto whatever support it is trained on.

When planting Clematis all that is necessary is well-draining soil with its roots shaded; mulch will take care of this. Its flowers should be in the sun, ideally for at least five-six hours daily, to produce abundant blooms. Clematis plants do not like competition from roots of other plants, so pick an appropriate spot in the garden and do not let the soil dry out during the growing season. Monthly fertilization with a low nitrogen fertilizer should also be done during active growth.

At some point, pruning will be necessary to avoid a tangled mess of vines. However, there are specific requirements when pruning a Clematis and timing will depend on its blooming season:

Clematis in the Type 1 category is spring-blooming and needs to be pruned immediately after bloom by removing all spent flowers, weak or dead stems. Cut other stems back to their first pair of healthy leaf buds. New growth will then begin, which produces the next year's flowers.

Type 2 Clematis is that which blooms in summer and fall. The flowers come from new stems produced in spring of the same year. In early spring, watch for swelling leaf buds that begin to show and cut off any dead material above these; after pruning, there will usually be 12-18 inches of stems above ground.

Clematis in the Type 3 category is twice-blooming – in spring on the previous year's stems and then again in summer or fall on the current year's shoots. After the spring bloom, cut out the spent flowers and any tangled stems so that new shoots will develop well for the second round of flowers.

Clematis really is a beautiful bloomer and will reward a gardener with lots of flowers if these guidelines are followed. Happy growing!

There is no public education class this Saturday, May 11th – Happy Mother's Day!

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.