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CLEMATIS

There are more than 300 species of clematis, and 1,000+ hybrids have been created. Most clematis are deciduous vines with very attractive flowers. Clematis are hardy and grow well in northeast Washington.

PLANTING AND CARE

- Clematis need loose, fast-draining soil. Inland Northwest soils tend to be neutral, which is ideal for clematis.
- Plant clematis in a site where the top of the plant gets lots of sun and the roots are kept cool. Cover the base of plant with mulch, rocks, or a shallow-rooted groundcover to help shade roots.
- Clematis should be planted deep. The top of the roots should be spread out 2-3 inches below the soil surface.
- Provide a stake, trellis or other surface for clematis to climb.
- Keep clematis moist and well fertilized. Apply a balanced fertilizer about once a month during the growing season.

PRUNING

The first spring, as buds begin to swell, all clematis should be cut back to the first two sets of strong buds on each stem. This encourages the growth of new stems at the base of the vine.

Clematis varieties are classified into three groups according to blooming time and characteristics: Group 1 (spring bloomers), Group 2 (repeat bloomers), and Group 3 (summer or fall bloomers). Each group has its own pruning protocol detailed below.

Group 1 Clematis:

Bloom only on old wood (e.g. previous year's growth) should be lightly pruned after they are done blooming. Prune out dead or weak stems.

Group 2 Clematis:

Bloom in the spring on old growth and again in the summer or fall on new growth should be lightly pruned in late fall or early spring to remove dead or weak wood and to shape and untangle. The number of later flowers can be increased if the seed heads from the first flowering are removed right after they are done blooming.

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Group 3 Clematis:

Bloom on new growth (e.g. current year's growth) should be pruned hard in late fall or early spring. Cut stems back to 6 to 12 inches from the ground (or 2 to 3 buds) for the first three years. Older plants should be pruned to two feet or less.

DISEASES

Clematis Wilt:

Ascochyta clematidina is the most common fungus to attack clematis. Clematis wilt can occur at any time but usually happens just as the flower buds begin to open. The whole plant can be affected or, more commonly, only one or two stems will wilt or turn black. Carefully cut off all diseased parts of the vine. The fungus will remain on the healthy-looking part of the stem so it is imperative that about one inch of the stem below the infection be removed.

Be sure to disinfect your clippers and dispose of diseased parts in a sealed plastic bag. New shoots will soon appear at or below the soil line. At worst, this therapeutic pruning will delay your flower display.

Clematis wilt is a nuisance but seldom destroys the whole plant. If the problem persists, the use of a fungicide labeled for use on clematis wilt may help. If you want to replace the plant there are several clematis that are resistant to the disease.