

Clematis Calender

July:

This month you can prune the viticella group back hard, but be sure there are buds below pruning point. I know of a few people that live in a cold climate that are using their spades to chop their Clematis off at ground level when the ground is frozen solid.

August:

In the milder areas you can start pruning from the middle of this month. Start pruning all the large flowering hybrids as well as "the only" summer flowering species and hybrids. This mean leave the "Group A" untouched and "Group B" is groomed so the thin and dead stems are cut off, stem fanned out so they will cover the designated area - JUST BE CAREFUL any bruised stem must be cut off to avoid wilt.

"Group C" to be pruned back hard, if not already done.

If you cut your hedge now, you can plant viticellas to clamber and beautify your hedge during the summer. **Always burn prunings from Clematis!**

Mulching with good leafy compost, feeding with a good all round fertilizer (blood & bone) be sure to supply some potash this deepens the colours, hardens the leaf and stem to better resist fungal attack. And last but not least some snail bait to keep those buggers of the new shoots. (they like them as I like asparagus, by the way the Russian is said to eat the new shoot of Clematis macropetala, boiled. Raw they are very hot, I reckon!)

September:

In the coldest districts the pruning time is from the middle of this month, in general Clematis and roses are pruned at the same time (see August). If lightly pruned we will have our first large hybrids in flower in the middle of the month. And the *C. armandii*'s start flowering.

October:

This is the main start of the spring flowering hybrids, if unpruned or lightly pruned they will start early this month if hard pruned then late (hard prune delays blooming approx. 4 weeks.) Train the new shoot sideways (hybrids) and Keep-up with the snail bait.

November:

Spray against mildew if you encountered problems last season. Keep an eye out for "Wilt". If wilting, don't hesitate: Cut back below attack point, it will soon be back again. Drenching with Benlate is helpful, but it is not a vaccination against wilt. Joy joy enjoy. **Always burn prunings from Clematis!**

December:

This month is the start of the summer flowering Clematis and the end of the spring-flowering hybrids' first flush or maybe it is the middle or start of a second flush on the earliest hybrids (approx. 8 weeks from pruning to flowering). The viticellas is a delight, clambering over roses, rhododendrons, azaleas, conifers in the hedges and over smaller trees.

January:

Groom plants that have finished flowering and remove seed-heads. Feed with Nitrophoska, mulch & water well and They will be back flowering in 6-8 weeks. If Clematis is allowed to dry out they will go in to temporary dormancy!

February:

The montanas will probably need a little guidance to help them covering what you want them to cover. Grooming and feeding continues, pruning has to come to a halt in order to let the plants ripen their wood before the winter. In the warmer areas probably late February in Taranaki to Mid February. Continue watering & keep mulched.

March:

Continue watering & keep mulched & enjoy.

April:

Enjoy the autumn flowering, keep watered and remember the size of the flowers is a reflection of how well watered and fed the plants are, keeping in mind too much nutrient under the blossom will shorten the period.

May:

Do not start pruning your Clematis yet. This can be quite tempting now the Clematis start looking tatty, but leave it. If you prune now, the plant will start sending new shoots and they will be damaged during the winter. *C. cirrhosa* varieties have started their flowering season.

June:

C. cirrhosa varieties are in flower. Leave your Clematis unpruned. This is a good time to go to the local library to check out the many Clematis books (see references for my choices).

Summer feeding:

Nitrophoska Blue Extra or Perfect, tomato fertilizer (or similar chloride free complete fertilizer) Chlorinated (muriated) fertilizer make woody plants more prone to mildew!

Clematis as cut flowers

Our own experience with cut flowers of clematis have been quite good although we have not really followed the recommended ways of conditioning the flowers. For that reason, we have been too late in picking them and have to transport the flowers long distances where they have been laying loose in a polystyrene box, but by treating them like roses if they were wilting, they have been up and standing turgid next morning again.

A single flower in a saucer or shallow bowl is very nice and makes a good effect.

Selecting a Clematis flower:

While selecting a Clematis flower for picking you should choose a flower with a thick strong stem, so they will not bend when picked. Choose a flower that has just opened or only partly open; 2/3 or so. (florists burn the cut with a lighter)

After selecting a flower the foliage should be removed in order to slow transpiration, then place the stem immediately in to cold water as deep as possible. Let the flower sit over night to be conditioned. Next morning a new cut under water, so no air is allowed to enter the stem and then place in their final vase (some varieties will hang if they are placed to deep in water). Fresh water each day is recommended and remember to top up the water level, their large flowers use quite a bit of water.

Preserving Seed-heads:

Seed-heads can be preserved in glycerine. Seed-heads are collected when fully developed, but not when in the fluffy stage. Put the freshly cut stem ends into a mixture of 1/3 glycerine and 2/3 boiling water, stir thoroughly and use when still very hot. The mixture should be 5 cm deep in a jar or similar container, stalks and leaves will turn rich brown while seed-head will be slightly paler and keep the silky texture. The jar needs to be placed in a cool, but dry place out of bright light. The seed-head is ready when the colour is even and the leaves slightly oily to touch.

Warning:

Grooming of clematis is not risk free, the sap from them can irritate your skin, even burn it. Do not touch your face especially the eyes (Merry says) when working with fresh green material. The *C. flammula* is recorded to be used of the Beggars in Rome when Nero was emperor year 54 to 68. They rubbed leaves on the hands where it caused blisters in order to get more from their almshgiver.

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