**Clematis Pruning**

 Regular pruning of clematis encourages strong growth and flowering and will also keep excessive growth in check. If left unpruned, clematis can turn into a mass of tangled stems with a bare base and flowers well above eye level. There are numerous clematis species, hybrids and cultivars, for pruning purposes they are split into three distinct pruning groups based on the time of flowering and the age of the flowering wood.

**Initial Pruning & Training**

If young clematis plants are left unpruned, they often produce very long single stems with the flowers produced only at the very top. Unless the plant already has three or four healthy stems growing from the base, all newly planted clematis should be pruned back hard the first spring after planting. Cut back to just above a strong pair of leaf buds about 1-foot above soil level. This will encourage multiple stems which can be trained in to supports to give good coverage.

During the spring & summer, tie in the new growth, spacing stems evenly on the support.

**When to prune Clematis**

**Pruning Group 1:** Prune mid-late spring, after flowering and once the frost has passed. This group comprises the early-blooming clematis that flower on shoots produced the previous season (old wood). They require no regular pruning except for the removal of faded flowers. In subsequent years some training and perhaps thinning may be necessary. If renovation is required, plants can be cut back to 6 inches from the base after flowering. This operation will affect flowering and should not be carried out again within three years.

**Pruning Group 2:** Prune in February and after the first flush of flowers in early summer. This group comprises the large-flowered cultivars that flower in May to June on short shoots developing from the previous year’s growth (old wood). Some varieties flower again in late summer on new growth. They require only to have the flowers cut off back to a large growth bud immediately below the flower as soon as flower is over. Doing so will encourage new growth to maximize flowering throughout the growing season. They can, if preferred, be left unpruned other than for the removal of dead shoot ends in spring.

**Pruning Group 3**: Prune in February. This group comprises clematis that flower from mid-late summer on the terminal of the current year’s growth (new wood). If this type is left unpruned, growth will continue from where it ended the previous season, resulting in a tangled mass of growth, flowering often well above eye level and stems bare at the base. These late-flowering clematis are best pruned back hard in February each year to the lowest pair of buds.

**Not sure which group you have?**
If you are unsure or forget which group you have, observe the flowering timeon your plant and use the following simple guide: Flowering before early summer (June), do not prune. Flowering from late June onwards, prune in late winter (February).