

Cross Pollination

Question of the Month - Curing Clematis Pruning Anxiety!

By Halton Master Gardener Claudette Sims

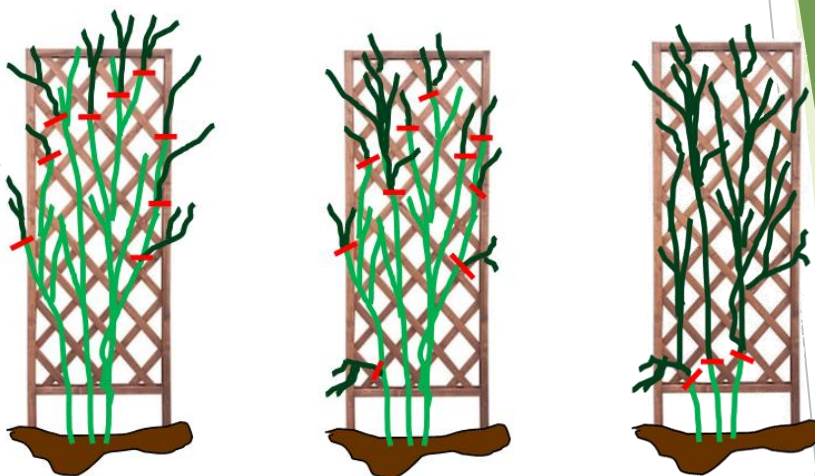
When do I prune my clematis? I don't get the Group 1, 2 and 3 thing!

The information about pruning clematis can be overwhelming. They are usually divided into 3 groups for pruning purposes, but this isn't very helpful if you've lost the plant tag or can't figure out what group of clematis you have. The easiest answer is that clematis should be pruned either in May, or in March, depending on the group.

The most common group is Group 2, which are also the hardiest and can be very lightly trimmed in March, before new growth appears. The least common group in your garden is the Group 1 clematis-most grow in warmer zones 6 & 7 and need very little pruning. That leaves Group 3, whose leaves and stems grow from the ground each year. They can be trimmed back to about 12 inches in early March.

Notice that Group 1 is barely pruned, while Group 3 is pruned to about 15 cm from the ground.

Here's a quick summary about each group in table format!



	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
How to ID different groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If it blooms before June, don't prune" • <u>Typically small flowered</u>, very long vine (+20 ft) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common form in Canada • Large flowered varieties that bloom June/July and sometimes a 2nd time in later summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stems die back in winter and grow new each spring from the ground
Bloom information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms on OLD wood from buds formed on previous year stems • Early spring –before June 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms on OLD and NEW wood • Blooms June/July on OLD wood from buds formed previous year • Reblooms later in summer or fall from NEW wood & buds formed current growing year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms in NEW wood formed that year • Summer and fall until the frost
Stems & Leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not die back in winter (new leaves will grow from stems) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not die back in winter (new leaves will grow from stems) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stems die to the ground over winter • New stems/leaves grow each spring from ground
Pruning Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally in May • Immediately after flowering, and only if you have to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March, before new growth appears • Lightly prune flowers after first flush to encourage more growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early March, or before new growth appears

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Question of the Month - Clematis Pruning (continued)

Additional Pruning Info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune only when needed & sparingly • Clear out dead or damaged wood • Cutting too early or late may cost you flowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More forgiving if you prune too harshly in March as there is a late season bloom • Remove dead wood and cut back 6 to 8 inches from remaining stems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune all stems back to a set of buds about 12 inches from soil
General Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of small single or double pink or white flowers • Vanilla scented blossoms • Resistant to clematis wilt • Vigorous, can reach 20-40 ft • Well drained soil in full sun to part shade • Typically from horticultural growing zones 6 & 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually bloom twice in season • Large flowered hybrids, some semi-double and others fully double flowering • Most common group in Canada • Usually horticultural Zone 4 rated Clematis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprises clematis that are usually horticultural Zones 5 and 6
Species /Cultivars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clematis alpina</i> • <i>Clematis armandii</i> • <i>Clematis cirrhosa</i> • <i>Clematis macropetala</i> • <i>Clematis montana</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clematis florida</i> • Clematis patens hybrids • Bees Jubilee • Vyvyan Pennell • Perle D'Azur • The President • Henryi • Ramona 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etoile Voilette • Jackmanii • Western Virgin's Bower • Niobe • Polish Spirit • Princess Diana • Rhapsody • Ville de Lyon • Taiga

Simplified Pruning Method (Adapted from Cathy Kavassalis)

Be ready to prune once the new growth appears in late winter. You may find a tangled mess of vines with live and dead growth interwoven. The stems of live and dead wood look alike, but leafy growth from the buds indicates a vine is alive. Start at the top of the plant and work down, cutting out the deadwood on each vine of the plant. Keep cutting down each vine until you find a live bud or growth. Once you find it, stop! Continue to prune all the vines until each is either pruned back to a new growth or to the ground if that shoot is dead. Once this is complete, secure each of the vines to the trellis and move on to the next plant.

Want to learn more?

- [Clematis Pruning Made Simple](#)
- [Tips for Pruning Clematis Vines](#)
- [Types of Clematis & How to Identify Yours](#)
- [Clematis on the Web \(database\)](#)
- [International Clematis Society \(Pruning\)](#)
- [Native or Invasive Clematis? Check the leaves!](#)
- [Virgin's Bower Native Clematis](#)
- [Invasive Sweet Autumn Clematis Distribution](#)



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Our native clematis, Virgin's Bower or
"Old Man's Beard" (*Clematis virginiana*)
Photo: A Cultivated Art FB post