

## Pruning clematis

Here are some tips on how and when to prune your clematis. The reason there tends to be confusion about when to prune is that there are three main groups of clematis, each requiring different treatment: spring flowering, summer flowering, and twice flowering (those that flower in spring and again in late summer). Following are some general rules for pruning each type of clematis. If you're not sure which kind you have, be patient ? wait and see when it flowers.

**Spring flowering:** These varieties, such as *Alpina* and *Montana* produce flowers on last year's growth. Once flowering is finished, cut back the stems that have bloomed. This will allow plenty of time for the plant to produce strong new growth for next year's flowers and prevent the vine from becoming too dense and tangled. Some really vigorous varieties may need extra pruning later in the season to control size and shape. You may even want to cut them right back to two or three pairs of buds every few years to renew the plant.

**Summer flowering:** These include the popular *Jackmanii* and *Tangutica* among others. They bloom only on new growth produced in the spring, and you should always prune them when the plant is dormant ? either in the fall or early spring before growth starts. Cut back last season's growth to two or three buds, or about 12 inches. If the plant is becoming too large or too dense, thin it by cutting some stems out completely, or cut back the entire plant every few years to renew it.

**Twice flowering:** The first blooms for these varieties, such as *Nelly Moser* and *Vyvyan Pennell*, are large and produced on last year's growth. The flowers in the second bloom are smaller and form on new growth in late summer or early fall. And you need to prune them twice. When the plant is dormant ? in the fall or early spring before growth starts ? prune lightly just to thin out tangled stems. Leave as much of last season's new growth as possible to ensure a good spring bloom. Once the spring flowering is finished, prune those stems more heavily so that plenty of new growth will come along for your late summer flowering. This time follow the same rules as for summer flowering varieties.

Sounds complicated? Don't worry, the important thing to remember here is that no matter if you have spring flowering, summer flowering or twice flowering clematis, you can't kill a clematis by pruning it at the wrong time. And if you're starting out with a new plant still in its nursery pot, the rules are simpler. Once you've planted your new clematis, cut back all stems to between 6 and 12 inches. Following the first year's growth (during which you may discover when your clematis flowers) again cut all stems back to one or two pairs of buds. Do this when the plant is dormant, in fall or early spring. Now during its second full year you can begin to follow the guidelines above.

You can also find lots more information about clematis on the web. Try these websites: [www.clematis.com](http://www.clematis.com), <http://clematis.org/> (American Clematis Society site), [www.britishclematis.org.uk](http://www.britishclematis.org.uk) (British Clematis Society site)... and many more.