

MARYLAND Home & Garden

INFORMATION CENTER

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A Quick Guide to Pruning Clematis

Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus-Univ. of MD.

Clematis vines are hardy vines with spectacular flowers that deserve a spot in any landscape. They frequently are grown on mailbox posts (probably the most popular use), fences, trellises, deck railings or sometimes even mixed into a perennial border. Clematis prefer a higher soil pH, however, a more important requirement is an organic rich and well-drained soil. There are many examples of clematis growing quite well among rhododendrons and azaleas in acid soils.

Plant clematis in a site that receives some good light, but not the full hot sun. The hot sun fades the flowers and bakes the soil causing harm to the roots. Mulching and watering is needed to reduce heat and drought damage to clematis.

There are many cultivars available to gardeners. They vary in size, flower form, color and time of bloom. There are dwarf types that only reach 24 inches tall while others may grow to twenty feet or more. Clematis vines will grow quickly and will need pruning. After a hard winter there often are many dead stems to be pruned out. The objective in pruning clematis is to maximize flowering and manage the size of the vine. However, looking at all those stems tangled together can be quite intimidating. Once you understand the flowering habits of the type of clematis, pruning it is really simple.

For pruning purposes, clematis are placed into three different pruning groups:

Group one consists of all the early-flowering evergreen species and their cultivars. They are all early to mid-spring bloomers. Prune them after the main



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or visit us on the web www.hgic.umd.edu

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flowering period has finished. Evergreen types are rarely grown in Maryland because most will not survive the winter in central Maryland and northward.

Group two consists of all the old-wood flowering, the double and semi-double large-flowered cultivars and the mid-season large-flowered cultivars. Prune them after the main flowering period has finished.

Group three consists of the large flowered late blooming cultivars. These all bloom on the current season's wood and should be pruned in the early spring.



How to Prune:

Essentially clematis plants are pruned either as a “hard” or a “light” prune.

- **Hard Pruning:** A hard prune refers to cutting all the stems to within a few inches of the soil. Be sure to leave a good set of buds. Hard pruning stimulates growth and is usually done on young newly planted vines during the first spring after planting. This is recommended regardless of the blooming time of the clematis. Hard pruning can also be done early in the spring on late bloomers, this will actually increase the number of blooms.
- **Light Pruning:** This type of pruning is the safest and is suitable for all types of clematis. In the spring, start with the removal of winter-killed stems. During the growing season cut back the ends of the stems that have finished blooming. This will help keep the plant in control and remove the spent flowers (dead-heading). Dead-heading will also stimulate continued bloom of late season bloomers.

“Expert Plant Picks” – Tough trees for mid-Atlantic urban conditions.

Mary Kay Malinoski, Extension Specialist, Entomology and David Clement, Extension Specialist, Plant Pathology

These trees are great choices for trees that may have been lost during the 2010 blizzards or just as new trees in your landscape. They have few if any pest problems and require little care once established.

American Holly, *Ilex opaca*

Native tree with a slow growth habit, good as an understory plant that will also take full sun; deer resistant, few pests or diseases. Prefers partial shade to full sun and moist well-drained soil. This broadleaved evergreen tree is prized as an easy to care for plant in the home landscape. Separate male and female plants are required for best fruit (berry) development. Fruit colors range from bright red to yellow. Plants show pyramidal

growth form when young and then become more open and irregular at maturity. Trees can be pruned for a tighter shape. Check local nurseries for cultivars with various mature sizes, fruit colors, and leaf colors.

Recommended Cultivars: ‘Old Heavy Berry’ prolific producer of large berries, ‘Jersey Princess’ (female, red fruits), ‘Jersey Knight’ (male) cold hardy, and ‘Satyr Hill’ rounded, attractive olive green leaves with red fruits.

Carolina Silverbell, *Halesia carolina (tetraptera)*

One of the best native trees for shady gardens, exceptionally pest and disease resistant, and easy to care for in the home landscape. Deciduous tree with leaves that are 2-5 inches long, alternate,

simple, oval; yellow green in summer with yellow fall color. White bell-shaped flowers appear in spring followed by curious winged brown fruits. It prefers partial shade and moist well-drained soil

Recommended Cultivars: 'Wedding Bells' (more floriferous) and 'Arnold Pink' (light pink flowers)

White Fringe Tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*

One of the best trees for partial shade to full sun, exceptionally pest and disease resistant, tolerant to air pollution. It is prized as an easy to care for plant in the home landscape. This native deciduous tree has a spreading open habit and leaves that are 3-8 inches long, alternate, simple, medium to dark green in summer with yellow to brown fall color. White fragrant flowers bloom in spring followed by blue-black fruit in fall. It prefers partial shade to full sun and moist well drained soil

Recommended Cultivar: 'Emerald Knight' more tree-like habit.

Persian Parrotia, *Parrotia persica*

Pest free with exfoliating bark, tough tree; tolerates urban conditions. It is an outstanding tree with few rivals in the urban landscape. It has a spreading, open habit and prefers full sun to light shade and well drained soil, very tolerant of most conditions. This deciduous tree has leaves that are 2.5-5 inches long, alternate, simple, medium to dark green in summer with yellow to orange-red fall color. The flowers are small and dark red and bloom in late winter or early spring before the foliage appears.

White Fir, *Abies concolor*

Good alternative to blue spruce with no serious pest problems, the best fir for the east and mid west. It has a conical shape with whorls of horizontal branches with evergreen, flat soft needles. Prefers full sun and needs well drained soil.

Recommended Cultivar: 'Candicans' striking gray-blue foliage.

Questions and Answers

by Debra Ricigliano, Certified Professional Horticulturist

Question: I need help identifying a type of perennial weed that shows up in my yard each spring. First I see shiny kidney or heart shaped leaves growing in March. Then glossy, butter-yellow flowers appear later in the month and into April. The flowers are supported on delicate stalks above the leaves. The plants die off around June and leave a mat of decaying matter. Under the plant debris there are bunches of little tubers and roots that will bring the weeds back next spring. What are these plants and how can I get rid of them?

Answer: From your description the weed sounds like lesser celandine or fig buttercup (*Ranunculus ficaria*). This vigorous groundcover was originally planted as an ornamental but now is reported to be invasive in nine states, including Maryland. It spreads by bulblets and underground tubers.



Small infestations can be dug by hand using a shovel making sure to remove entire plants and as many tubers as possible. Contact herbicides containing the active ingredient glyphosate can help control it. These types of herbicides are

non-selective so use according to label directions and do not spray on desirable plants. For detailed information visit the [Plant Conservation Alliance, Alien Plant Working Group's web site](#). Control of this weed will take more than one season.

Question: We want to plant blueberry bushes in our home garden. In order to produce berries, do we need to plant two different kinds of bushes? I understand blueberries require acidic conditions. How do I acidify the soil?

Answer: Careful site selection and soil preparation are important before planting blueberries. Select a site that is not in all day sunlight; strong morning light and some late afternoon shade would be ideal. Also select a site that that will allow you to water the plants easily or install a drip irrigation system. Blueberries have a fibrous root system but have few root hairs making them sensitive to droughty conditions. On average, plants require at least one inch of water per week. Berry production does increase with cross-pollination of two varieties. Therefore, it is recommended to plant more than one kind.

Take the time to test the soil before you plant. Blueberries require an acidic soil in the 4.3 - 5.3 range. Prepare the soil by incorporating compost, leaf mold and peat moss. If the pH is too high sometimes it is necessary to incorporate sulfur or iron sulfate. Soil test results will guide you in lowering the pH. Blueberries do not like heavy,

clay soil. For information on soil testing read [HG 110, Selecting and Using a Soil Testing Laboratory](#). For additional information on growing blueberries, including variety recommendations go to [HG 68, Getting Started with Small Fruits](#).

Question: As per your recommendation I sent in a soil sample of my lawn to be tested by one of the labs on the fact sheet on soil testing. Now that I have gotten the results back I am confused on what I need to do. For one thing they recommend 100 lbs. of lime per 1000 square feet to be put down on my lawn. That seems like an awful large amount. Can you help me understand the results?

Answer: Yes, we can help you interpret your soil test results. The best way to go about this is to call, with your soil test results in hand, to speak to one of the horticulture consultants. From what you have told us, we can assume that the soil pH of your lawn was low. It can take large amounts of lime to adjust the pH into the proper range of between 6.0 and 7.0 for grass. When results indicate more than 50lbs. of ground limestone be applied, the application should be split in two. Spread 50 lbs now and the remaining 50 lbs. about 6 months later. Please read our publication on [soil test basics](#). If you have further questions please give us a call Monday - Friday 8 AM - 1 PM, 800-342-2507. We would be happy to assist you.



HGIC has jumped on the social media bandwagon. If you enjoy receiving the HGIC newsletter, stay in touch more often by becoming a fan of ours on Facebook and following us on Twitter.

Is all this social media technology new to you? Facebook is an online gathering spot where you can connect with friends and people who have similar interests. Go to [HGIC's facebook page](#) for a preview. Like what you see? Click the Sign Up button to get started. Then become a "fan" of the Home and Garden Information Center. Fans of HGIC can read posted comments, post questions, and comment on posts by other fans.

Twitter is another way we are communicating with Marylanders. Tweets are very short messages (140 characters or less) and often include hyperlinks to other web sites or publications. To learn more visit [our twitter page](#) and click the Join today button.



What's new for Maryland's Food Gardeners in 2010?

Maria Malloy, Home and Garden Information Center

Youth Gardening

Want ideas on how to introduce food gardening to youth at home or school? We've added a Youth Gardening section to the GIEI website. There you will find information on Food Safety in the School Garden and the Growing Healthy Habits (GHH) Curriculum from University of Maryland Extension's Food Stamp Nutrition Education program.

Growing Great Gardens

Share your gardening secrets with others! We will post your tips on the GIEI website (with your initials only unless you indicate otherwise). Click on the link above more details. Email your tips to groweat@gmail.com. In the subject line put the month you're writing the tip for. We'll cover a different topic each month.

- March – seed starting
- April – fencing
- May – companion planting
- June – irrigation
- July – edible landscape
- August – growing tomatoes
- September – ethnic veggies
- October – veggie storage

Grow It Eat It Classes

Again this year, Master Gardeners throughout the state are offering a variety of beginning and special topic vegetable gardening classes. Click on the Grow It Eat It classes link to see what is offered in your county.

Mouthwatering Morsels from Maryland

How are you preparing your fresh fruits and veggies? Share your favorite recipes. Send us your good ole family favorite or dare to share a new creation. Send your recipe by email to groweat@gmail.com and put 'Recipe' in the subject line. We'll use only your initials unless you indicate otherwise.

Locally Grown

Find a [Community Garden](#) in your county or find a source of foods and goods produced in Maryland in the [Buying from Local Maryland Farms page](#).

Live Chat

Have a food gardening question? Live Chat is a new feature for HGIC and GIEI. Chat with our experts on-line to get your questions answered.

Get Connected

Have you joined the Grow It Eat It network? [Sign up today](#) and help us reach our vision of 1 million Maryland food gardeners producing their own affordable, healthy food! As of March 4, 2010, there are 4,465 gardeners (1,716 gardens) in the network.

Grow It Eat It has its own social media sites. Follow us on [GIEI's Facebook](#) page, on [Twitter](#), and the [Grow It Eat It blog](#).

MONTHLY TIPS FROM HGIC

Every month we publish timely tips on our website. This year we will be highlighting some “best of” tips. If we pique your interest, please visit our website to read more (www.hgic.umd.edu) or call us with your questions - 800-342-2507. Be sure to click on the [blue links](#) to view related publications or photos.

MARCH

Lawns

- Late February through the end of March is the second best time to over-seed your lawn to make it thicker or cover bare areas. ([HG 102](#))
- It is not a good idea to apply fertilizer to cool season turf in the spring unless your turf is weak and thin or if you did not fertilize this past fall.
- If you had a crabgrass problem last year consider applying a pre-emergent herbicide.
- Chickweed, dead nettle, henbit and other broadleaf winter annual weeds are growing again. They can be treated with a labeled broadleaf weed herbicide when they are more actively growing later this month or throughout April.

Woody Ornamental Plants

- March is the beginning of the planting and transplanting season for woody landscape plants. Avoid working with wet soil; wait until the soil dries out. Read [HG 24](#) for more planting tips.
- Begin pruning by removing any branches broken by winter weather; then remove dead or diseased branches and make any necessary cosmetic cuts. Read [HG 84](#).
- For a bright vase of color indoors, the prunings of spring flowering shrubs can be brought in and placed in water to force early blooms. Forsythia, pussy willow and some blooming ornamental fruit trees work well for this.
- The tiny reddish brown eggs of spruce spider mites can be seen with a hand lens on the twigs and needles of spruce at this time. If you notice signs of this pest, apply an ultra-fine horticultural oil spray which will smother and kill the eggs ([photo](#)).

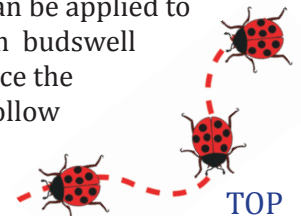
- If you had a problem last year with scale insects on woody landscape plants spray them with a dormant oil prior to bud swell. Spray on a dry day when temperatures are above 40 degrees F. and are expected to remain above freezing for at least 24 hours.

Ornamental Plants

- Many types of annual flower plants can be started indoors this month.. Check seed catalogs or packets to determine the best time to start seeds indoors.
- Pansies are now widely available and can be planted for an early display of color in garden beds. Be careful not to set out tender annuals until after the last frost date which is around May 10 in Central Maryland. For more information, see the [frost date chart](#) on our web site.
- Clean out flower beds, divide perennials, and top-dress beds with 1 inch of compost.
- Cut down ornamental grasses to within 2 inches of the ground.

Fruits

- New fruit plants can be set out as long as the soil is not saturated.
- Brambles, apple and pear trees can be pruned at this time. Peach trees should be pruned after flowering.
- Dormant oil sprays are very effective at reducing populations of some tree fruit pests, including scales, spider mites, and aphids.
- Liquid lime sulfur is a safe and inexpensive material that can be sprayed on raspberry, and blackberry plants prior to bud swell to prevent cane diseases. It should also be applied to peach trees when buds begin to swell, but before green tissue is visible, to help prevent peach leaf curl disease. Bordeaux mix can be applied to apple and pear trees from budswell to green tip stage to reduce the incidence of firelight. Follow directions on label.



- Fireblight damage on apples and pears should be pruned out prior to blooming. [See more about fireblight on our website.](#)

APRIL



Vegetable Gardening

- Potatoes, onion sets, onion seedlings and peas can be planted as soon as the soil can be lightly worked. Chinese cabbage, leeks, beets, kale, mustard, and turnips can also be planted now. Start sowing spinach and lettuce seed outdoors in cold frames. You can also start sowing seeds of spinach, lettuce, kale, mustard, sorrel, corn salad and other greens indoors under fluorescent tubes. These plants will be ready to transplant outdoors in 2-3 weeks and should be protected by a cold frame or floating row cover. Pepper plants are slow growing and can be started indoors in March. It is still too early to start tomato transplants.

Mulch

- Mulches should be applied only 2-3 inches deep around ornamental plants and kept away from direct contact with shrub and tree trunks. Mature trees do not benefit much from being mulched except to provide a protective barrier around their trunks from riding lawn mower damage.

Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Termite swarms are becoming active. If you have a swarm, it may mean that there is a colony living under or very near to your home's foundation. To learn more about termites check out our [diagnostic web site.](#)

Wildlife

- Those delightful peeping sounds you may be hearing in your backyard are spring peepers ([photo](#)), a small frog that lays its eggs in water. Many other frogs, including wood, tree, and pickerel frogs are also becoming active.
- Many birds are now actively scouting your landscape for a place to nest this spring. Now is the time to put up a birdhouse (nest box) in your yard to encourage nesting.

Lawns

- There is still time to do some over seeding of your lawn. Good seed to soil contact is important if the seed is to germinate and survive. Remove leaves and other debris and rake the soil. The best lawn grasses to use are varieties of turf-type tall fescue. Broadcast tall fescue seed at a rate of 3-4 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. for over seeding. Double the seeding rate if seeding over large barren areas. Cover the area lightly with straw and water daily until germination. Once the grass has germinated you can water less frequently, hopefully there will be adequate rain this spring to maintain the young grass.
- It is not a good idea to apply fertilizer to cool season turf in the spring unless your turf is weak and thin or if you did not fertilize this past fall.

Woody Ornamentals

- When the soil has fully thawed, it is an ideal time to plant new or transplant trees and shrubs. ([HG 24](#))
- Rhododendrons and azaleas can be fertilized with a balanced fertilizer after the bloom period. See [HG 23.](#)

Herbaceous Ornamental Plants

- Early to mid April is the latest time that all types of annuals can be started indoors under cool, white fluorescent lights. Most annuals and vegetables need a five week head start before planting outside.
- If you haven't already done so, now is the time to clean out flower beds and divide perennials.
- April is an ideal time to plant herbaceous groundcovers. Groundcovers are also useful as a border around buildings, garden beds and groupings of trees.
- Clematis usually has a lot of winter killed stems. Prune the dead wood out now before too much of the new growth has fully emerged.
- April is a good time to divide water lilies and other aquatic plants that have become overcrowded. Lift the plants from their containers and using a large knife or a sharp spade cut the rhizomes into two or more pieces.

Fruit

- This is a good time to plant tree fruits and small fruits. Fruits that require little or no spraying include figs, European plum, tart cherry, Asian pears, and all the small fruits.
- Before planting blueberries, be sure that your soil pH is in the 4.3-5.3 range and the area has been heavily amended with organic matter.
- Thin bramble canes so that new shoots are spaced at least 6 inches apart.
- Prune peach trees during the bloom period or immediately after.
- Prune out black knot cankers on plum and cherry trees.
- Fertilize strawberry plants with a balanced fertilizer if the plants were not fertilized last summer.
- Blueberry plants should be fertilized with ammonium sulfate at bloom and again when fruits first appear.
- Brown rot of stone fruits can be best controlled with fungicide sprays during the bloom period.

Vegetable Gardening

- Continue to start sowing seeds of spinach, lettuce, kale, mustard, and other greens indoors under fluorescent tubes. These plants will be ready to transplant outdoors in 2 weeks and should be protected by a floating row cover. Or direct seed these crops in loose, fertile garden soil covered with a cold frame or floating row cover.
- Tomato, eggplant, and pepper, seeds can still be started indoors under lights.
- Beans and corn can be sown where soil temperatures are above 50°F. Squash, melon and cucumber plants can be started indoors now as well and grown for 2-3 weeks before transplanting into the garden. Avoid the temptation to set out warm season crops until after all danger of late frosts.
- Mix in a handful of finely ground lime, either calcitic or hydrated, with the planting soil of each pepper and tomato transplant to prevent blossom-end rot.
- Cutworms are nocturnal pests of vegetable plants that chew through plant stems and drag

young plants into underground burrows. Place a cardboard or plastic collar around plants to prevent feeding or apply a rough or gritty material, like ground up oyster shell or sharp sand, around vulnerable plants.

Fertilizer

- Mature shade trees do not typically need to be fertilized. Avoid the temptation to fertilize ornamental garden plants that appear to be healthy and productive.
- Fertilize spring flowering bulbs now while the foliage is green with a balanced fertilizer like 5-10-5, 10-6-4 or 10-10-10. This can be very helpful for young or weak bulbs. Fertilizing now will strengthen the bulb for best bloom next year.

Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Termite and ant reproductives are actively swarming inside and outside many houses. The termites are dark brown, about ¼ inch long with 4 long wings of equal length and a fluttery flight habit. See [Bulletin 245](#) for additional information.
- Ticks are very active now. Wear light colored clothing and get in the habit of checking yourself, your children and pets closely for ticks after spending time outdoors.
- Boxelder bugs that over-wintered in your home are trying to get out now. They are red and black insects that are harmless and can be vacuumed or swept up.

Wildlife

- Attract wildlife by reducing lawn areas. Lawns provide little support for wildlife. Plant islands (clusters) of native vegetation. See [HG 120](#) for a list of Native Plants of Maryland)
- Woodpeckers may be heard this time of year tapping on wooden structures. This may be territorial behavior or actively searching for insects. They prefer soft woods like cedar. Dissuade persistent woodpeckers by tacking some hardware cloth over the area.



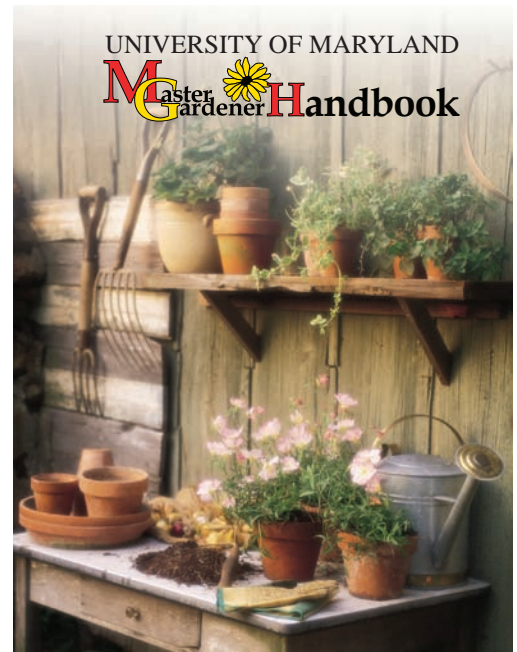
The Maryland Master Gardener Handbook

Be prepared for spring gardening with the best resource available!

This indispensable gardening guide was produced by Central Maryland Research and Education Center for Maryland's Master Gardener Program. It is also available to horticulture professionals and the gardening public. The Handbook explains many of the Hows and Whys of horticulture and places special emphasis on diagnosing and solving plant problems.

Handbook Highlights

- 28 chapters; 640 pages including 400 color photos. All material completely revised and updated in the Fall of 2008
- Stated learning objectives for each chapter
- 5 chapters on the basics: ecology, botany, soils, entomology, plant diseases
- 8 chapters on plant groups: turfgrass, herbaceous plants, woody plants, vegetables, small fruits, tree fruits, herbs, and houseplants
- 14 chapters on other important topics (e.g. composting, landscape design, aquatic gardening, wetlands, wildlife)
- A 114 page integrated pest management section that includes diagnostic keys for all major plant groups and special keys for cultural and environmental problems and structural and nuisance pests.
- Extensive new glossary, index, and resource appendix
- Durable spiral binding and laminated covers
- A Bay-Wise approach to gardening that will help you improve your soil, nurture your plants, and manage most pests without pesticides.



Cost: \$69.00 (includes shipping and handling) For a sneak peak inside the book visit mastergardener.umd.edu/Handbook.cfm and click on Sneak Peak. Click here to [order online](#) or [print an order form](#).

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