

# Lavant Horticultural Society

## 'Clematis through the Seasons'

Everett Leeds

10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Everett has had an interest in clematis for over forty years. He is a member of the International Clematis Society and founder member of the British Clematis Society (Chairman four times), he has co-written two books on clematis.

His knowledge and enthusiasm were evident in the talk that was very well received by a large gathering of members.

### History

The native *Clematis vitalba* (Old Man's Beard) was the only clematis known in England until the reign of Elizabeth I, when *Clematis viticella* was introduced from southern Europe.

Other European clematis were then introduced: *C. recta*, herbaceous, not a climber, with small white flowers, and *C. integrifolia*, again herbaceous, not a climber, from the alpine region.

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that plant hunters introduced species from China, *C. patens* and *C. lanuginosa* that brought larger flowers and new colours.

In the late 1850s Jackman's nursery, Woking, bred *C. jackmanii*, which had a much larger flower size than any previous clematis.

A hybridisation race then ensued.

Ca. 1900 clematis wilt appeared.

*C. texensis* was introduced just before 1900 from Texas, bringing red tulip-like flowers.

### Propagation from cuttings

- The basics of taking the cutting can be [seen here](#), although Everett made the following points:
- Before putting the cuttings into the pot, put them in a plastic bag with some systemic fungicide, to allow the leaves to take up the fungicide and help protect the cutting from fungal attack'
- He puts the cuttings up to their necks around the edge of a pot filled with pure perlite. This then goes into a propagator, or failing that, is covered with a clear plastic bags secured with a rubber band around the pot.
- He sprays the cuttings with weak systemic fungicide once a week.
- After 5-8 weeks the root system should have developed – this can be checked by feeling the resistance when pulling lightly on the cutting.
- The cutting can now be potted on, in John Innes N° 3 with a handful of grit, into a pot which is only just large enough for the roots; if the pot is too large, the roots will tend to rot.
- Keep damp and pot on when the roots fill the pot.  
It is best to keep the new plant in a pot until it can be planted out the following spring.

### Training up trees

When training up trees that are still alive, plant the clematis away from the tree, to the north, and train it up against the trunk with a cane.

**Feeding** – Everett recommended that clematis be fed with rose fertiliser.

## **SPECIES & CULTIVARS MENTIONED**

*Including those from all the following groups:*

### **Early season species:**

#### **Early large-flowered clematis:**

Can be affected by clematis wilt which can affect all the plant or just parts of it. Cut off all affected parts and dispose of in bin.

It is recommended to plant deep, so that the part of the plant in the soil may escape wilt.

If the plant does not recover it can be replaced with another clematis in the same place – there is not the same problem as there is with replanting roses in the same place.

With their large blooms, they are susceptible to damage by wind and rain, so they are best planted in a sheltered location. Also, they do not like too much direct sunlight, so plant in east-, west- or even north-facing locations, but not in south-facing.

There are about 4,000 cultivars.

#### **Late flowering clematis:**

Prune hard to about 1 foot in February.

#### **Herbaceous Group:**

Bushy, non-climbing, grow to a height of 0.75 – 1.25 m.

At end of season cut down to 20 cm ready for winter.

Herbaceous clematis do not like too high temperatures, so when planting in containers, insulate the inside of the container, e.g. with bubble wrap.

Must be watered at least once a week.