

Clematis Old and New from Around the World

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HISTORY OF CLEMATIS IN CULTIVATION

The only clematis species native to England is *Clematis vitalba*, commonly known as "old man's beard."

The first clematis introduced into England was *C. viticella* in the 1500s, closely followed by other European species, such as *C. cirrhosa* var. *balearica*, *C. integrifolia*, and *C. recta*, the latter two being herbaceous clematis.

Then travellers to the middle East started to introduce species, such as *C. orientalis*; and as the New World of North America opened up, *C. pitcheri*, *C. viorna*, *C. reticulata*, and others started to arrive in England.

The first clematis hybrid was raised in 1835. This was a cross between *C. integrifolia* and, most probably, *C. viticella*. *Clematis xeristemon* retained the perennial-type habit of one of its parents, *C. integrifolia*. It is non-clinging in its habit and only grows to approximately 5 ft or so in height.

The great surge of interest in the development of hybrids happened as soon as *C. patens* and its many forms and cultivars were introduced from Japan. These started to come into England from 1830 onwards. The introduction of these large, flat, open-flowered types gave breeders of that time a marvelous opportunity. Isaac Anderson Henry, in Scotland, was one of the first to produce a very large, flat, open-flowered clematis, *C. reginae* in 1856 and in 1858, *C. 'Jackmanii'* was raised by Jackmans of Woking.

There followed a great surge of clematis breeding and, between the 1850s and the turn of the century, some 500 different cultivars were listed. Most of them, sadly, have been lost to cultivation. *Clematis 'Fair Rosamond'* was one of the Jackman cultivars raised at that time and, today, it is still the only large-flowered clematis to have a slight scent.

The appearance of clematis wilt after the turn of the century meant interest in hybridisation started to decline a little. However, some new introductions were still made, including *C. 'Beauty of Richmond'*, raised by the Russell family.

Clematis 'Ernest Markham' is well known throughout the world. Ernest Markham was the Head Gardener for William Robinson at Gravetye Manor. The pair did a great deal of work with clematis, mainly introducing cultivars or good forms of the species which mostly came to them from France.

In this century two families' names are linked to the introduction of new clematis taxa. The Pennell family did a great deal of hybridization and their nursery is probably the only one to have actually intentionally raised cultivars under a proper breeding programme in the 1960s and 1970s. The Fisk family, who run Fisk Clematis Nursery, did very little direct breeding but introduced many cultivars raised by their customers. When I was a junior partner and managing director of Treasures of Tenbury Ltd in England, we also, like Fisk and Pennells, exhibited clematis at the Chelsea Flower Show. Our three companies were the main ones responsible for promoting and marketing clematis during the early 1970s.

MODERN INTRODUCTIONS

***Clematis* ×*cartmanii* 'Joe'**. A fascinating hybrid between two New Zealand species, *C. marmoraria* and *C. paniculata*, both evergreen clematis. It is very compact and free flowering in its habit.

***Clematis cirrhosa* 'Freckles'**. Raised by the author and introduced from wild collected seed from the Balearic Islands. Its advantage over the species is that it flowers during October, November, and December.

Hardy *C. alpina* and *C. macropetala* types. To export clematis to Scandinavia and North America we have introduced some extremely hardy clematis. These include *C. alpina* 'Tage Lundell', 'Pink Flamingo', and 'Constance'. We have been, and still are, looking for good hardy forms of *C. montana*. During the severe winter of 1980-81, most of the plants growing in the central part of England were lost when temperatures dropped to -20C, or in some cases -26C.

Japanese Forms. From what I understand, *C. patens* may well be a Chinese species which has naturalised in Japan. Certainly, some of my colleagues have collected many forms of *C. patens* in the wild in Japan, including double forms. While visiting Japan in 1984 and 1994, I had the chance to find various forms of *C. patens* in the wild, including doubles. Some were similar to *C.* 'John Gould Veitch', which was introduced into England in the mid 1800s.

Amongst the *C. patens* cultivars I have introduced are 'Guernsey Cream', 'Royal Velvet', 'Sugar Candy', 'Anna Louise', 'Liberation', and 'Arctic Queen'. This latter was a chance seedling which occurred in our nursery and has fully double white flowers throughout the season. It flowers much more freely and is much stronger than *C.* 'Duchess of Edinburgh', the only other double white.

***Clematis viticella*.** These are really marvelous garden plants. They do not suffer from clematis wilt and should be promoted and grown much more widely. They grow and flower well in hot summers and do well in the U.S.A. *Clematis* 'Södertälje' is one of the selections in evaluation work that we are doing at the Chicago Botanic Gardens.

***Clematis integrifolia*.** One of our latest introductions is *C.* 'Petit Faucon', a chance seedling which we were extremely lucky to find in our nursery. Its female parent was 'Daniel Deronda', which has huge 8- to 10-inch flowers. We are not sure of the identity of the male parent but it may be *C. integrifolia* or *C. xeristemon*.

***Clematis florida*.** This was introduced into Sweden by Thunberg, then re-introduced by Von Siebold in the 1830s. It has always been difficult to propagate, but slowly we have found a technique and are now currently producing substantial numbers. Forms include 'Alba Plena' which arrived as a sport from *C. florida* 'Sieboldii' during the 1830s.

Neither 'Sieboldii' nor 'Alba Plena' are completely stable and it was with great joy that, about 5 or 6 years ago in our nursery, we found that 'Alba Plena' had sported and reverted back to what I believe to be the true *C. florida*, which has not been grown commercially since the early 1800s. One stem of 'Alba Plena' was flowering quite normally with one flower each side of the node as 'Alba Plena'. Then suddenly, one of the nodes produced a flower of the true species *C. florida* on one side and *C. florida* 'Alba Plena' on the other. As this stem developed, 'Alba Plena' slowly disappeared

and every node produced the flower of what I believe to be the true *C. florida*. Therefore, we were able to propagate from this plant. Another three or four plants also sported the following year. We have selected out a particularly good form that is reasonably stable and are using it in our breeding programme.

However, this form of *C. florida* then “reverted” further to give us a plant which we are currently calling *C. ‘Guernsey’* which has slightly pinkish anthers but the centre has aborted and it is totally sterile. It is an extremely free-flowering plant and we believe we have now stabilised it and we look forward to introducing this onto the market in the not-too-distant future.