

# Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

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**Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture** is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to [kemeryr7@frontier.com](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

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## All America Selections 2026

AAS WINNERS are flowers and vegetables that have been "Tested Nationally & Proven Locally.™" Each AAS entry is tested for superior garden performance by horticulture professionals in test gardens across North America.

### Kale Rubybor

This kale is a dual-purpose showstopper, as it won a Gold Medal award in both the ornamental and vegetable trials, a first occurrence in the AAS trials. Rubybor's rich, deep purple foliage and uniform, compact habit make it a standout ornamental in any garden or container. Unlike many kales, this selection maintains its excellent color and tidy, bushy shape with shorter internodes, making it ideal for smaller spaces and Southern heat. The leaves are exceptionally tender and non-bitter, providing a continuous harvest of high-quality greens from spring until frost.



### Dianthus Supra Cherry Picotee



This interspecific hybrid joins the Supra series, delivering profuse blooms on a compact, bushy plant. Judges praised its excellent habit and strong heat and drought resistance, keeping the foliage green and the flowers vibrant all summer. The unique, fringed blooms feature a picotee pattern, opening with dark cherry centers and soft pink edges. Supra is easy-care and requires no deadheading, ensuring three seasons of color in landscapes, garden beds and containers.

### Coreopsis Sun Globe

Praised by judges for its habit and bloom quantity, this Coreopsis variety produces tons of fluffy, golden yellow, semi-double flowers on sturdy stems slightly earlier than comparisons. The plant maintains a tidy, compact and densely branching form, delivering multiple flushes of vibrant gold from spring through fall. Ideal for borders or containers.



## Basil Treviso

This award-winning basil is well-suited for a kitchen garden, featuring a tight, compact and highly branched habit perfect for larger containers. Not only does it offer slightly anise-flavored leaves, but it also stays tender longer, resisting bitterness after harvest and maintaining leaf quality late into the season. The AAS judges loved its vigor, heat tolerance and notably slow-to-flower nature. The bright foliage also resists oxidation.



## Bean, Pole Majesty

This purple pole bean delivers on all fronts: high yield, superior quality and rugged performance. Plants maintain dense, dark green foliage with notable resistance to insect damage and excellent recovery from summer heat stress. The pods are straight, uniform in size and easy to harvest due to their contrast against the leaves. The beans have a sweet flavor and tender, non-bitter texture. This early-maturing variety is a well-suited for vertical gardening.



## Heliopsis Sole Giatto

Sole Giatto is a compact false sunflower perfect for containers, borders or any sunny spot. Standing 12 to 16 inches tall and wide, this highly floriferous perennial explodes with long-lasting bright yellow blooms from late spring through fall. Bred for extended appeal and continuous garden performance, Sole Giotto attracts beneficial pollinators while resisting deer and rabbits. Hardy in Zones 4 to 8, this vibrant and easy-care plant is ideal for adding reliable color to any landscape.



**Tomato BadaBing!** offers protection against Septoria leaf spot, early blight and late blight, ensuring plants stay healthy all season. These early-season tomatoes are juicy, crack-resistant, 1.5 inches and bright red. Despite being an indeterminate plant, BadaBing! stays a manageable 40 inches tall. This reliable tomato was bred for superior garden performance and robust disease resistance.



# All About Clematis



Some fancier gardeners called clematis KLEMitus – others call it ClemATus. Regardless, these climbing plants are used extensively by gardeners worldwide. Clematis plants are native to many parts of the world, including North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. They are found in a variety of habitats, such as woodlands, meadows, and rocky areas. The first recorded mention of clematis dates back to the 16th century when a Swiss physician and botanist named Conrad Gessner described a plant that he called “virgin’s bower.”

The story of clematis begins in the vast and diverse landscapes of Asia. This is where the majority of clematis species call home, thriving in a range of climates from the temperate forests of Japan to the rugged mountains of China. China has a rich diversity of clematis species, with over 100 native varieties. The Chinese have long admired clematis for its beauty and medicinal properties, incorporating it into traditional medicine and art.

Known for its exquisite gardens, Japan is also home to a significant number of clematis species. The Japanese have cultivated and prized clematis for centuries, selecting and refining varieties for their captivating beauty.

While Asia holds the majority of clematis species, Europe has its own share of these captivating vines. The European continent is home to approximately 10 species, including the commonly cultivated *Clematis viticella*, known for its vibrant purple blooms. In recent history plant breeders in Poland have released several striking cultivars.

The 18th century marked a significant turning point in the history of clematis. European botanists, inspired by the beauty of Asian clematis, began to collect and introduce them to Western gardens. This period saw the introduction of iconic species like *Clematis patens* and *Clematis lanuginosa*, which laid the foundation for modern clematis breeding.

In the 18th century, clematis began to gain popularity as ornamental plants in Europe. The first cultivated species was introduced to England from Italy in 1597. Soon after, other species were imported from China and Japan, leading to the development of new cultivars through hybridization.

The 19th century witnessed a surge in interest in clematis, with horticulturalists and breeders actively hybridizing different species to create new and stunning varieties. This era saw the birth of many popular clematis cultivars, including the large-flowered hybrids that dominate gardens today.

Clematis flowers have different meanings depending on their color. White clematis symbolizes purity and innocence, while pink represents love and affection. Purple clematis is associated with royalty and power, while red symbolizes passion and respect.

Clematis adorn our gardens so beautifully because of their special ability to climb with curling tendrils. No matter what garden style we tend, no matter what space we have, there is a clematis that will add texture, romance and softness to the structure of our walls, doors, fences and trellises.

**Requirements** - Most clematis do best when planted in areas with full sun (six hours or more), although there are some varieties suitable for partially shaded exposures (four to six hours). The soil should be loamy, fertile and very well

drained. Clematis enjoy their lower section and root area protected from the hot sun. To achieve this protection, plant a spring blooming perennial, small shrub, or cool season grass in front of the clematis to shade its root zone. Placing a small structure or potted plant nearby works well, as would planting the clematis with an eastern exposure (morning sun only). To help keep the root zone cool, a mulch of mushroom compost or other well-rotted organic matter should be applied to the surrounding area of soil, in a diameter of one to two feet. Be sure not to mulch closer than three inches from the crown of the plant, because it could kill the clematis by rotting it. Peat moss is not recommended as a mulch for clematis due to its water repelling properties. Unless you want your clematis to cascade as a groundcover, you'll need some means of support. The support or trellis should include a grid system to allow the leaf petioles to entwine as the vine grows. While establishing your clematis, maintain consistent moisture levels to develop healthy roots. Do not allow the soil to become completely dry between waterings, but also be careful not to over-water, particularly if you have clay particles in the soil.

## **Planting**

A clematis that flowers in spring and early summer can take shade, so plant on north or east-facing walls. Summer blooming types do best on eastern, western or southern exposures. Fall bloomers can face southern, northeastern or northwestern exposures. Before planting your area, properly prepare your bed. Dig a hole 18" in diameter and 24" deep then add soil amendments of compost and soilless mixture. These additions will provide nutrients and increase drainage. Evenly incorporate these components with the original soil so the roots are not directly planted in the compost. Clematis should be positioned at least two inches below ground level to aid in root establishment. If the clematis is to be planted near a wall, tree or shrub, dig the hole at least one to two feet from the object. If planting near another clematis, three to four feet apart is recommended. Mulch the surrounding area with a layer of compost two inches thick but be sure not to come within three inches of the crown of the clematis. After planting, directly apply a liquid starter fertilizer which may help develop new growth. When using any type of fertilizer, deeply water and keep fertilizer at least four inches away from the crown or any other part of the plant to avoid burning the foliage. Water the newly planted clematis well and keep moist until established.

## **Watering and Fertilizing**

Because clematis are thirsty vines, they will benefit from one to four gallons of water per week. If planted in a hot location, they may need up to one gallon of water per day. Watering should be done in the cooler part of the morning, or in the early part of the evening to avoid watering in direct sunlight. If a liquid fertilizer is being used, it can be applied to the clematis with a watering can. Remember to deeply water fertilizers and not come within four inches of the stem. Fertilizing should be done in mid-spring and mid-summer; however if the clematis is in bloom at those times, discontinue applications until blooming has stopped. Using fertilizer during the bloom cycle will shorten the flowering period. Suggested fertilizers can be 10-10-10, 5-10-10, or 5-10-5. Mulching with compost will add invaluable humus to the soil, decrease the need for water by retaining moisture, and keep weeds to a minimum. Compost should be uniformly spread (about two inches thick) and not closer than three inches from the crown of the plant. Gently work into the soil. In autumn, bonemeal can be applied at the rate of 3lb oz. per sq. yd. It is rich in phosphates and encourages root growth. Bonemeal is a slow-release fertilizer and will work through the following spring. Work gently into the soil, then re-apply two inches of compost for winter protection and to maintain moisture the following spring.

## **Pinching**

During the first few seasons, the gardener should concentrate less on bloom production and more on establishing a healthy plant. On large-flowered clematis it is best to wait at least one month before pinching so the plant can become established. Look for two good buds, twelve inches above the ground, and pinch out the stems above those buds. This procedure reduces the amount of foliage which lessens the strain on the roots and encourages new shoots to appear. After the new shoots grow to a length of about twelve inches, pinch above those buds. By continuing these steps, you will end up with a well-branched plant.

## **Pruning (When to Prune)**

Large-flowered, spring blooming clematis blooms on growth produced from the previous year, prune lightly and selectively in late winter or very early spring.

Large-flowered, summer blooming clematis blooms on current year's growth, prune hard (12" -18") from soil line, in late winter or early spring.

Small-flowered, fall blooming clematis, (Sweet Autumn Clematis for example) blooms on current year's growth or previous year's growth, prune hard (12" -18") from soil line or prune lightly, in late winter or early spring. If you make an error, don't despair. If you've pruned an early blooming clematis too hard, it will simply bloom later. If you give little pruning to a late blooming clematis, it simply means that it will be less productive and may be straggly at the base. If you forget to prune entirely, you still will get some blooms.

## **Defining Pruning Methods**

**Light Pruning:** This process thins and cleans untidy growth from the previous year. Usually it is done to spring blooming clematis and is performed early spring just as the plant breaks dormancy.

**Hard Pruning:** This process refers to the cutting and removing of all of last year's growth. Prune between twelve or eighteen inches above soil line. This is performed in late winter or early spring on summer or fall blooming varieties (clematis that blooms on new growth).

**Tidy Pruning:** This process is usually done to early flowering species, after blooming.

Removing any untidy foliage increases air circulation and helps it comfortably fit into the space you are giving it. This is performed in late spring or early summer, which allows enough time for the vine to produce the new growth needed for next season's blooms. Note: Severe pruning strong woody stems is never recommended. Clematis respond poorly to this action and the result may be fatal.

## **Winter Protection**

Most varieties offered in our region (Zone 5) are winter hardy with no added protection needed from the gardener. On the contrary, varieties that flower on previous year's growth face the potential problem of freeze damage to their overwintering flower buds. One method to help protect these buds is to wrap them with corn stalks or burlap. Either of these methods will work well at keeping cold winter winds away from the flower buds, while at the same time allowing air circulation. To give added protection to the root system, use evergreen boughs or clean straw as a mulch. This discourages root damage by heaving of the soil during winter temperature fluctuations.

## **Transplanting**

If purchased as a nursery grown containerized plant, transplanting may be done at any time throughout the growing season. If a mature plant is to be moved to a new location in the garden, this should be done in late fall or early spring, depending on when that variety blooms.

Here is a recommendation list of specific varieties for certain situations:

### *Northern or eastern exposures*

Suitable vigorous growing large-flowered hybrids are:

'Bees Jubile', 'Comtesse de Bouchaud', 'Dr. Ruppel', 'General Sikorski', 'Hagley Hybrid', 'Lincoln Star', Clematis maximowicziana -(C. paniculata) 'Sweet Autumn Clematis', 'Nelly Moser', 'The President'.

### *Spring Bloomers*

In this group all flowering comes from previous years growth. In spring watch for swelling leaf buds and cut out only the "dead" material above these buds. Tie all growth loosely to the trellis at this time.

Alpinia 'Helsingborg', 'General Sikorski', 'Mrs. Robert Brydon', 'Belle of Woking', 'Lincoln Star', 'Nellie Moser', 'Carnaby', macropetala 'Blue Bird', 'Henryi', 'Dr. Ruppel', 'Mrs. Robert Thompson

### *Summer Bloomers*

This group flowers on new growth for that current year. Pruning can be done in late winter or early spring. As new leaf buds begin to show, cut all of last year's material, leaving 12 to 18 inches above ground.

x Jackmanni, 'Ville de Lyon', 'Ernest Markam', Clematis tangutica

### *Fall Blooming Clematis*

Clematis maximowicziana (Sweet Autumn Clematis). This vine probably will not need pruning for a few seasons. There are opinions that suggest 'Sweet Autumn Clematis' only needs tidy pruning in late winter or early spring and flowers quite well even when neglected. However, since this vine can reach 30 feet and if you prefer to keep the vine shorter, hard pruning in late winter or early spring will shorten the height and still allow abundant flowering, as this clematis blooms on previous year's growth and current year's growth.

Properly prepare your clematis by planting in a well-drained, rich, moist soil and placing the clematis where its "feet" stay shaded and its flowers stay in the sun. If you match the clematis to the space available, provide the support, water and mulch, and trim according to the blooming time of your clematis, you will have accomplished the basic requirements for a beautiful plant. Now realizing that clematis are not difficult to grow (given the proper requirements) the possibilities arise and the "wheels begin to turn". What and where do I add color, texture, and interest to next? There's always that other favorite part of the garden to dress up!

## **Doing More With Less – Cooking In The Olden Days**

When I reminisce about Christmas holidays from long ago, I am amazed at how my Mom managed to cook a Christmas dinner with the tools at her disposal. We had no natural gas available at our home on Hamilton lake, so propane was the only option. The propane stove my Mom used was very small. The pictures show examples of what my mother used to cook a large turkey, stuffing, yams, mashed potatoes, vegetables, pies – everything needed for a holiday dinner. I don't know how she managed it all. I know she began cooking very early. It explained the stressed look on her face when she made the meal. The best thing we could do for her was just to get out of the way. There was no dishwasher, so everything had to be done by hand, and she usually refused offers

of help. Most of the time we all hung out in the living room where my father would play his favorite music on his stereo system, or pick up his guitar and play music from the thirties with songs like "Sadie Brown".



# Older Spruce – Always Watch for Cytospora Canker

Reprinted from BP-38 Cytospora Canker of Spruce by Paul Pecknold

Dr Pecknold was a renowned plant pathologist at Purdue University – He had a very dry sense of humor and spent loads of time out in the field in counties working with members of the commercial horticulture industry. Cytospora canker has a different name now, but I still refer to it by its old name Cytospora – as many old timers in the industry still use the old name.



Following are Dr Pecknold's observations about the disease:

The beauty of many ornamental spruce plantings has been destroyed by the fungus disease known as Cytospora canker. This damaging stem disease is most commonly found on blue spruce, but it also has attacked Norway spruce and hemlock. Cytospora canker usually is associated with older and/or weakened trees, trees whose lower branches or roots have been injured, and trees that are growing in restricted sites or in other poor growing situations. It is seldom a problem on young, vigorous trees.

## Symptoms

Cytospora canker first affects the lower branches and gradually progresses upward. Needles on affected branches turn brown, die and begin to drop off, resulting in a dead, naked branch. Mite injury produces similar symptoms and is often confused with Cytospora canker injury. To check for mites, hold a sheet of white paper under a branch and tap the branch sharply. If mites are present, they will fall off and be seen as black specks crawling over the paper.

Branch cankers (infected areas) are often difficult to find, but are generally located well back on the branch near the trunk of the tree. A bluish white resin or pitch frequently coats the cankered area of the branch and is an important diagnostic symptom of Cytospora canker. This sticky resin frequently will drip onto the trunk and branches below, often producing an extensive accumulation of resin.

Small, black spore-producing bodies of the fungus are produced in the cankered area of the bark. After a moist period, orange-colored, curled tendrils of spores are produced which are then spread by splashing rain and wind. Consequently, infection is thought to take place most frequently during the spring and fall.

Because older, weakened trees are most susceptible to Cytospora canker, it is important to maintain and/or improve tree vitality. When planting new trees, choose a site with good, moist, well-drained soil.

Avoid planting trees near any structure (roadways, sidewalks, building foundations, etc.) that might restrict root growth. The two most important steps in maintaining good tree vigor are to water and fertilize on a regular schedule. With normal rainfall and a favorable site, trees require little additional watering. However, during periods of prolonged drought or on dry sites regular watering is important during the growing season. The most beneficial method of watering is to apply an amount equal to 2 inches of rainfall every 2 or 3 weeks in one complete, heavy soaking of the feeder root area.

If trees are located in a grass area, normal fertilization of the lawn is generally sufficient to maintain tree health: otherwise trees should be fertilized every 2-3 years with a high-nitrogen fertilizer.

With older, well-established trees, avoid any disturbance to the root system that may result in root injury or poor root growth.

Where possible (without destroying tree appearance), selectively prune out branches that retard air movement near the base of the tree. These low branches frequently are wounded by lawnmowers, pets, and general traffic and thus are most frequently invaded by the fungus. Weak and injured branches should be cut off flush with the tree trunk. Pruning during wet periods can spread the disease; therefore, prune only when the foliage and bark are DRY. Certified arborists can apply fungicides to keep *Cytospora* at bay, along with methods to promote healthy trees.

## Proven Winners

Proven Winners searches the world to bring you vibrant flowering annuals, perennials and shrubs that deliver the most beautiful garden performance. When you grow Proven Winners, you'll surely fall in love. Our plants have been proven in trials conducted in numerous sites worldwide to be: Easy to grow and care for Covered with blooms Bright and colorful Healthy and vigorous Long-blooming Tried and tested. Proven Winners are most often placed in highly visible locations to attract customers. They almost are never placed on sale or clearance. They usually are more expensive, but usually they are high quality plants. Following are some Proven Winners that caught my eye.

### **SUPERBELLS MAGIC® Double Grapefruit Calibrachoa**

Dynamic, rose-like blossoms open lemon yellow, then take on soft pink tones when exposed to UV sunlight. A slightly looser habit allows it to mix beautifully in hanging baskets.

Full, well-branched, mounded trailing habit

Grow in hanging baskets, window boxes, container recipes and monocultures

6-12" height; 12-24" spread

Part sun to sun



## Superlophus™ Sunglow Texas primrose



Meet one of our most dependable, heat and drought tolerant annuals! This Texas primrose, which was derived from a native Texan species, has proven in trials to thrive in hot, arid, sunny conditions. Even in 100°F weather, established plants only need watering every few days. Additional trials have also revealed its versatility and merit in warm, humid climates, making this one of the best annuals that everyone can grow well. It is ideal for growing in containers and landscapes where radiant yellow flowers cover the finely textured foliage while attracting beneficial pollinators all season.

Award Winner - Continuous Bloom or Rebloomer - Long Blooming - Heat Tolerant = Deadheading Not Necessary - Drought Tolerant Attracts: Bees, Birds, Butterflies

## 'Catwalk Queen' Nepeta

Characterized by exceptionally large, lavender-blue blossoms that are nearly twice the size of most catmints of this type. Thick leaves form a stocky, sturdy mound. Ideal for hot, dry garden spaces.

Attracts: bees, butterflies and hummingbirds

Resists: deer and rabbits

Heat and drought tolerant

10-12" height; 18-20" spread

Zones: 3-8

Full sun



## 'Prairie Princess' Vernonia



This cultivar of our native ironweed turns the heads of people and pollinators alike from late summer into fall when masses of rosy, purple flowers cover the top half of the plant. This variety resists lodging and has good mildew resistance, so the foliage remains attractive all season.

Attracts: bees and butterflies

Resists: deer and rabbits

26-30" height; 30-36" spread

Zones: 4-9

Full sun

## **INCREDIBALL STORM PROOF *Hydrangea arborescens***

Everything people want in a smooth hydrangea - prolific, gorgeous, white mophead blooms and stout, sturdy stems that won't flop after a heavy summer rain as its name implies. Though its blooms aren't quite as enormous as the original Incrediball® hydrangea, they are so numerous that you'll never even notice. This robust, vigorous, heavy bloomer has a rounder, denser habit than many smooth hydrangeas.

3.5-4' height; 3-4' spread - Zones: 3-8 - Full sun to part sun



## **REMINISCENT® *Yellow Rosa***

Satisfying a long-held demand for a healthy, fragrant, fully petaled, yellow rose took many years of trialing and evaluation to achieve, finally resulting in this stunning new cultivar. This gorgeous rose bears large, double flowers with the classic form and fragrance people love, but with much-needed disease resistance and vigor. A long bloom time extends its interest from summer into fall.

3-4.5' height; 3-4.5' spread = Zones: 4-9 - Full sun



## **BLOOMERANG SHOWMOUND™ *Syringa x pubescens***

Meet the world's first dwarf-mounded reblooming lilac, and the first to bear white flowers in the Bloomerang® series. Dense clusters of fragrant, pure white flowers appear first in spring, then again from midsummer through fall. This highly disease resistant reblooming lilac is easy to grow and will be the highlight of your spring, summer and fall landscape. 1.5-3' height; 2-3' spread - Zones: 3-7 = Full sun



**POWERBALL™ *Hydrangea paniculata*** - With rounded mophead blooms instead of the typical cones, this hardy new panicle hydrangea will be a huge hit, especially in climates where bigleaf hydrangeas aren't hardy. Strong, sturdy stems carry densely packed flowers which open lime green, lighten to creamy white, then take on deep pink tones in fall. A mid-sized habit makes it useful for many landscape applications. 3-6' height; 3-6' spread. Zones: 3-8



**Our Christmas Tree** – Every year we decorate our artificial tree with a different theme to make things interesting. This year we added butterflies and birds to the tree and used hydrangea flowers collected from the garden to give the tree a more rustic appearance. The flowers are a salmon colored poppy



Last month I was honored to be named member of the month at Turnstone – where I do my physical therapy twice a week.

It's easier to get there now as the city finished completely re-doing the alley behind the house. Thanks' Mayor Tucker.



## The Three Foot Tall Christmas Tree

After we moved from Wolf Lake Indiana to Hamilton Lake Indiana we had to make adjustments. Our Hamilton Lake house was a real fixer-upper, and it was much smaller. This meant there was no room for a normal sized tree in the tiny living room. My father purchased a small artificial tree that fit on top of the fireplace. Each year he would set up the tree and decorate it, Gone were the days when my sisters and I would help decorate the tree.

I missed the days of watching my sisters dance to Peggy Lee's "Rocking around the Christmas Tree" in our former much larger living room and eating popcorn and watching the Ed Sullivan show on Sunday evenings together.

There were new memories to be made as my sister Sharon and I would play dodgeball in the very small living room. We had to stop after we broke my father's favorite picture hanging on the wall. Our Mom covered for us when Dad finally noticed the picture was missing – telling him it just fell off the wall for some unexplained reason. Mom would often cover for us to keep us out of trouble.



My eldest sister Cindy passed away over a year ago. She lived far away and her memory faded towards the end. She loved for me to call and we would spend hours reminiscing about those days from our youth. Nowadays my sister Sharon who lives even farther away in New Mexico reminisce about those days also – The Three foot tall tree – playing dodgeball in the living room – the wonderful Christmas dinners my mother would make on her tiny stove. Visting my mother's relatives at family reunions and holidays. My sisters would do their best to try and teach me the new dance moves- the Jerk-the Twist- in an effort to try and help me be more popular with girls. My mother playing games with us and blatantly cheating at cards. They were wonderful times for all of us to remember – especially at Christmas time.

The picture to the left shows the fireplace where the 3 foot tall Christmas tree was placed (not shown on the upper right) This picture was taken when I was approximately 16 years old. My sister Cindy is shown on the left with my sister Sharon on the right. I was showing off my new golf clubs I had received for Christmas.



## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

*To: proven winners committee: I would insist that I Hoggles should have a Proven Winners selection of catmint named in my honor. Only a true Proven winner feline could tolerate the disdain and lack of proper care my caregiver provide. I humbly await your reply...*

*To subscribe to this electronic newsletter, ask questions, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com - or text 260-431-6893. I will not share information with others. Ricky*

*Kemery will not knowingly discriminate in any way based on race, gender etc*