

# Old Man's Beard *Clematis virginiana*

**Plant Type:** Native Flowering Vine  
**Sun Exposure:** Full Sun, Part Sun, Shade  
**Season of Interest:** Summer, Fall  
**Bloom Time:** Fall  
**Bloom Color:** White  
**Height:** 15 to 20 ft. vine  
**Spread:** 3 to 6 ft.  
**Spacing:** 6 ft.  
**Water Needs:** Average  
**Maintenance:** Prune hard in winter  
**Soil Type:** Clay, Loam, Sandy  
**Soil pH:** Acidic, Neutral, Alkaline  
**Soil Drainage:** Well Drained  
**Pests:** None  
**Diseases:** None  
**Wildlife:** Bees, Butterflies, Hummingbirds



**Description:** Old Man's Beard, also known as Virgin's Bower, Devil's Darning Needles, or Woodbine, is a showy native vine that blooms in a flurry of small white fragrant flowers in mid-to-late summer. The long vines can extend up to 20 feet and flower for nearly a month. This avid climber will easily twine around a trellis or fence, or tall vegetation and shrubs.

This plant is dioecious, with male and female flowers produced on separate plants. Abundant flowering occurs regardless of gender, but the showy seedheads are formed from the female flowers. The extravagant seed heads trail down white and gold "whiskers" which give this plant its name. Old Man's Beard is a host plant for the Clematis Clearwing Moth, *Alcathoe caudata*. For more information see:

[plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/clematis-virginiana](http://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/clematis-virginiana)



**Care and Growing Tips:** This perennial, deciduous vine can be found growing in moist lowlands, thickets, and woodlands, especially those bordering streams and ponds. It readily climbs natural elements like trees and shrubs or other structures such as fences and trellises. Like other types of clematis, it climbs by wrapping its leaf petioles around an upright support.

This clematis is perfect for naturalizing those woody or wilder areas of the garden. It's fairly deer resistant and grows rapidly. The fragrant white flowers attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees while the dense green foliage serves as nesting sites for birds. The vine prefers a rich, fertile loamy or silty soil with average to above average moisture levels. It grows best in partial shade. Virgin's Bower care is much easier than with other types of clematis and it has no reported insect or disease problems.

Old Man's Beard is a species of clematis that blooms only on new wood, so radical pruning won't affect flower production. It can be lightly pruned to control its shape anytime during the growing season or trimmed back to 8 to 12 inches (20-31 cm.) above the soil line in winter. Despite the need to control its vigorous growth, this clematis is not considered harmful to trees. With control measures, it can be a wonderful addition to a naturalized garden. Their profuse delicate white blossoms and trailing seed heads add charm to any garden from late summer into fall.