

Wm. Wheat & Son

THE FLOWER & GARDEN CENTRE

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Gardeners Guide to:

Cyclamen

(*Cyclamen persicum*)

As with most plants, it is worth knowing where they originate from and the conditions that they thrive on in the wild. Cyclamen originate from the Middle East, particularly the Alpine slopes of Turkey, where they are found in abundance in cool moist areas. They first became popular as a houseplant in late Victorian times, growing exceptionally well in the cool damp, pre-centrally heated homes of that period. Today we have many hybrids and varieties, including the relatively new miniature varieties, growing to six inches or less, many with scented flowers.



Cyclamen like to be cool, 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit (10- 15 oC). is the ideal (but will stand temperatures right down to and slightly below freezing). Place your plant in bright winter light away from direct sun, such as a north-facing windowsill, but avoid those with a radiator underneath. Stand on a tray or in a large pot cover with a few pebbles in the bottom and keep the pebbles moist to increase the humidity surrounding the plant. When the plant begins to droop slightly, (cyclamen prefer their roots to be slightly dry rather than too wet for too long). stand it in a shallow saucer of water adding a drop of liquid feed, for about half an hour, and then return to its pebble tray. Alternatively apply water sparingly to the surface of the compost, but avoid watering the corm. It is important to keep the crown of the plant dry to avoid infection from grey mould (*Botrytis*) which can easily spread, affecting leaves, flowers and the corm itself.

When the flowers fade remove them by twisting the stems slightly and giving a sharp tug. The stem should come away from the corm cleanly. The same applies to any leaves that may need removing – if left the stems will rot and destroy the buds developing in the crown.

The most common cause of early plant death is high temperature and dry air. This causes pale yellow leaves that are small, with long stalks, and the collapse of the plant, so check the temperature. Anything over 60 oF. will drastically shorten its life. Other possible causes of the above symptoms are lack of water or lack of direct sunlight.

A cyclamen will carry on producing flowers well into the spring, however as the weather gets brighter and the days get longer the plant will start to lose leaves as it begins to enter the dormant stage of its life cycle. Reduce watering in response to the demands of the plant and eventually stop watering altogether. By now the plant will have hardly any leaves and no flowers. Place the pot on its side in a cool dry place (under the staging in a greenhouse is ideal) and leave it there until the end of July. During this rest time the corm will start to make leaf buds like little bumps on the surface of the corm, when you see these starting to develop it is time to re pot the plant. Remove the corm from the old compost, gently rubbing away the loose soil from the roots and re plant it back into its old pot using fresh compost, (we recommend that you use Levington compost with added John Innes, available ready mixed from the garden centre). The plant will now start the growth phase of its life - producing leaves and at the base of each leaf a flower bud. Place the plant in a bright sunny place to grow on, increase watering as the plant develops more leaves adding a general purpose fertiliser such as Miracle -gro to the water every other watering. The plant should start to flower again around the beginning of september.