

Genus Cyclamen:

The hardy dwarf Cyclamen are one of the many delights of the alpine world. If you become hooked it is possible to have a cyclamen in flower in the garden or under glass throughout the year.

Cyclamen belong to the Primulaceae family and are mainly found growing around the Mediterranean Sea; some are found at sea level but mainly inhabit hills and mountains between 300 and 2150 metres.

Growing conditions can be achieved by careful outside planting or by growing in pots in a cold frame or alpine house. They resent being disturbed which has to be borne in mind when growing from seed or buying plants.



The species can be divided into four groups;

1. Coum, hederifolium, purpurascens and repandum, which are the hardiest and can be grown outside.

2. Cilicium, confusum, mirabile, parviflorum and pseudibericum. These can be grown outside in shaded positions in the south of the country.

3. Balearicum, creticum, graecum and libanoticum.

These Cyclamen really need alpine house conditions with protection from overhead damp and frost.

4. Africanum, cypricum, persicum, rhodium and rholfisianum, which need inside conditions with frost exclusion.

The outside species like a gritty well-drained location in dappled shade, preferably with some leaf mould, they dislike waterlogged conditions. Inside plants should be moved or re-potted for most varieties, only when necessary in June or July and March for Purpurascens.

Growing Cyclamen from seed gives good results particularly if sown in August and September when the seed has just ripened. You need John Innes No.2 potting compost together with 1/3 grit, or old potting compost can be used in seed trays or 5" pots. The compost should be moistened and the seeds pressed in and lightly covered with compost. A 10mm layer of grit is then recommended to preserve moisture and restrict weed growth. Pots are then best kept in a shaded area or a cold frame until strong summer sunshine is over. If sown immediately, that of autumn flowering species in the autumn and spring flowering species in the spring, most varieties benefit from being allowed to grow for about twelve months before re-potting. Until you gain experience it is probably safest to transplant seedlings when the weather is beginning to cool a little in the autumn, September perhaps.

Buying plants in pots is a good source as long as the tubers are not dried out. Cyclamen sold as dried tubers



will be difficult to establish and may even remain dormant until the next growing season.

The major pest of Cyclamen plants is the Vine Weevil, whose fat grubs, about 1/2" long when fully grown, feed on the roots causing sudden collapse of growth. An annual treatment of 'Provado' just before growth commences is beneficial.

During the growing period, inside a little water should be given preferably from below to prevent the compost from drying out. When the foliage has died down watering should be reduced to a minimum of preventing the compost from becoming dust dry.

Occasionally tubers will fail to produce growth and remain dormant for a year or longer, there is no cause for alarm if the tuber remains firm. If the tuber is dead it will soon betray the fact by rotting.

- *Peter Jones*

Photos of a wide range of autumn flowering species can be found in diary entry 31 of 'Plants at Kentish Croft'.



(Cyclamen coum f. album - taken by Robert)

Other photos (taken by Robert Amos):

- Cyclamen hederifolium
- Cyclamen persicum