

Cultural Details: Cyclamen (F1 Hybrids)

A popular Winter-flowering pot plant, much quicker to produce with the advent of the F1 hybrids. The mini-flowered varieties are being increasingly used for Winter containers as they are relatively hardy.

The main consideration in growing Cyclamen is to keep them growing smoothly, with as few checks to growth as possible.

Variety Selection

We offer a standard mixture of fast-growing large flowered hybrids (Sierra) with a very uniform habit and flowering time, and a wavy flowered mixture (New Wave). In addition the miniature-flowered Miracle Mixture is ideal for small pots and Winter containers.

Programming the Crop

Seed sown late March will produce flowering plants from October onwards. Sow April for flowering plants November onwards.

Propagation and Growing-on

Seed can be soaked for 12 hours prior to sowing, which helps remove a germination inhibitor from the seed coat. Sow onto a free-draining, low nutrient compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Use clean trays, bench tops and water supply to reduce disease potential. Sow the seed evenly and thinly, and cover with a moderate layer of compost rather than vermiculite, as this will help push the seed coat off the emerging seed leaves. Water lightly after sowing.

Place the trays in the dark, or cover with black polythene to exclude light. Maintain an even temperature of 15-18 °C, higher temperatures will reduce germination. When the first seedlings have emerged, move into a light position, still at the same temperature. Maintain high humidity to make sure the seed coat falls off the emerging leaves. Shading will be necessary on the brightest days.

Seedlings should be ready for pricking out after 8-10 weeks from sowing. Prick out into a low nutrient, loose and well-drained proprietary compost. When pricking out it is important that the top of the developing corm is just visible above the compost. A 40-cell or similar sized cell tray is suitable at this stage.

Do not over water at this stage, as Cyclamen are slow growing and prefer to be kept slightly on the dry side. Wet compost will encourage infestation by Sciarid Flies, and a range of diseases.

Pot up when the plants have filled the cell and have good root growth. If the plants become overcrowded in the cell trays this will result in a growth check. Use an 8 or 9cm pot for the miniature types, and a 12cm shallow pot for the larger varieties. Various potting substrates can be used – from a standard, coarse, free-draining compost, to the same with 10% clay can be added, to a mixture of soil-based and peat based compost, which has the effect of slowing initial growth but giving a better habit later on. Once again, make sure that the developing corm is just proud of the compost surface.

Grow them on at around 12-15 °C, shading through the brightest periods of Summer to avoid leaf scorch. As the plants establish and bud up, begin liquid feeding the plants ; a 1:0:2 feed should be adequate. Maintain a temperature of around 12 °C into the Autumn. Keep good air movement through the crop, and do not allow the plants to become waterlogged. Large Spotting on the flowers indicates Botrytis, a symptom of poor air movement. Remove odd dead or dying leaves/flowers to avoid Botrytis (grey mould) attack. Initial flowers can be pulled from the plant until your marketing period has been reached.

Pest and Disease

Good glasshouse hygiene is important to a successful Cyclamen crop. Monitor frequently for the signs of Cyclamen Mites (distorted emerging leaves), Spider Mites (webbing on leaves and flowers, mites visible), Thrips (in flowers and buds, marking of emerging flowers), Aphids and Vine Weevil Larvae in the compost (plants will collapse as the roots are chewed through). Fungicidal drenches as appropriate to the crop should avoid root disease problems, but any collapsing or dying plants should be destroyed.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.