

## **GROWING CYCLAMEN**

Cyclamen are often called Shooting Star. They are winter blooming plants with either red, pink, or white flowers and heart-shaped leaves. Many people consider them difficult to grow and keep healthy. They buy them, enjoy the flowers, and then throw them out. Understanding the cultural characteristics of Cyclamen will allow owners to enjoy them without having to discard them prematurely.

Their fussy, prima donna, reputation comes from one cultural quirk -- they like it cool. The key is to provide a temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit in the day and 45 degrees at night. This makes it a good prospect for energy conserving gardeners.

Cyclamen do best if the soil is kept evenly moist--not too dry or too wet. This is not difficult to do if the bulb-like tuber is planted in soil containing a high percentage of peat moss or vermiculite. Cyclamen grow well in most lighting, although a southern exposure in spring and summer may be too bright. Frequent applications of fertilizers with a high phosphorous content will encourage heavy blooming.

In spring, Cyclamen go dormant. When the leaves yellow, stop watering the plant. When the leaves have died back store the plant in a dark, cool location until July. At that time, re-pot the tuber if it is becoming too large for the container or if it has been in the same pot for more than one year. When re-potting, set the tuber so that the top half sticks out of the soil to minimize the possibility of tuber rot.

When the weather is warm, the Cyclamen can be placed in its pot outside. Place it in a shady place and be sure to water it frequently. When new foliage appears, begin to fertilize it again. In early September, bring the plant inside and allow the plant to acclimate to the indoors before the heat comes on. By Christmas time, you should have the Shooting Stars to brighten the holidays and the grey winter days that follow.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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