

### Enjoy the beauty of Cyclamen

The name 'cyclamen' (pronounced Sik-la-men) is from the Greek *kyklos* or circle referring to the flower stalks which coil themselves into a spiral after the seed is set in the pod. Most hybrids are derived from **Cyclamen persicum**, from the Mediterranean. These perennials are easy to grow with a variety of flower and leaf colour and patterns. They are usually treated as indoor pot plants, but may be also planted out into the garden in a cool shady position. The best variety to grow in the Canberra and Queanbeyan garden is *C. neapolitanum*.

<b>Propagation:</b>	From seed to flowering takes about 14 to 18 months. The seed ripens in December and is sown at the end of March when the seed is hardier. I suggest the easiest way is to purchase established corms or a plant already grown. Take care to plant the corms so that they are raised half above the potting mix surface. This prevents the newly emerging petioles (leaf stems) coming into contact with the potting mix and rotting, otherwise 'damping off' of the corm may occur. Always use a premium grade potting mix.
<b>Indoors:</b>	They like as much light as possible during winter months without placing them near windows in full sun. When the flower buds start to appear keep them in a light, airy room. Cyclamen must be kept in a cool place in the house, especially in winter when heaters are operating. An ideal place can be an unheated bathroom. A rapid yellowing of the leaves usually indicates the position is too hot for the plant. Keep away from in front of air conditioners.
<b>Watering in pots:</b>	Water indoor cyclamen carefully during the summer months, taking care not to have the potting mix too wet. Only water when the mix becomes dry on the top, then water and allow to drain. If using a saucer, fill it with small pebbles, then place the pot on top of the pebbles to keep the roots of the plant out of water. A good draining mix will make all the difference to the plants survival and prevent root rot. If potted indoors keep the plant cool by regularly spraying with a fine misting during the hot summer months.
<b>Feeding:</b>	Commence as soon as the first flower buds appear (about May). A liquid feed with <i>Maxicrop</i> seaweed nutrient alternated with <i>Phostrogen</i> plant food at fortnightly intervals is ideal. Overfeeding can produce weak growth and cause flowers to droop and/or drop. Plant nutrients should be applied to a wet soil to ensure maximum uptake by the plants roots.
<b>After-care in pots:</b>	At the end of the flowering season (about Oct/Nov) reduce the watering gradually, but not altogether. Place the pots outside in a shed with shading and plenty of ventilation. Alternatively pots may be placed on their side in a cool shady place to allow the corms to become dormant. They can also be lifted from the pot and stored in damp peat moss. In February new growth will start to appear on the corms, which may then be potted up in a minimum of 160 mm (6in) or 175 mm (7in) pots. Alternatively plant your cyclamen out in the garden in filtered shade in summer, they do not mind winter sun.
<b>Pests &amp; diseases:</b>	During the summer months aphids and looper caterpillars can be a problem. Aphids hide on the underside of the leaves and on the new flower buds. Control these with soapy water or Pyrethrum. Looper caterpillars chew the leaves. The safest control is simply picking them off when they appear. The fungal 'Grey Mould' occurs in cool cloudy or high humidity warm weather. It can spread through the whole plant including the corm and destroy the plant. Careful removal of dead leaves and spent flowers on a continuous basis will help prevent this disease.

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