



Horticulture

Cyclamen care

Cool temperatures and bright light is the prescription for success with cyclamen. Place this flowering plant in an east window. A daytime temperature of 60 to 65°F and a night time minimum temperature of 50°F should keep it blooming well into next year.

The white, red or pink flowers grow tall with nodding stems above the rosette of heart-shaped, blue-green to dark green leaves. The foliage is marked with white veins and light green splotches.

Water the cyclamen whenever the soil begins to feel dry and try to keep the soil around the roots moist at all times.

Water with lukewarm water and be careful to keep it off the foliage and crown as the plant is very susceptible to crown rot.

Fertilize the plant with a houseplant fertilizer using one-half the recommended strength every two weeks while it is flowering. When new flowers



cease to appear and the leaves turn brown, reduce the frequency and amount of watering and place the pot in a cool spot.

After flowering, let it rest until warm spring weather arrives. Repot in a mixture of equal parts houseplant potting soil and peat moss, with half the crown above the soil. Place in a sunny window or in a protected spot outdoors where it will be shaded during the brightest part of the day. (MJF)

Winter Care of Houseplants

Winter weather adversely affects growing conditions for houseplants. Proper care during the winter months can help insure the health of houseplants. Most houseplants grow well with daytime temperatures of 65 to 75°F and night temperatures of 60 to 65°F. Temperatures below 50°F or rapid temperature fluctuations may damage some plants. Keep houseplants away from cold drafts and hot air vents. Also make sure houseplant foliage doesn't touch cold windows.

Many houseplants prefer a humidity level of 40 percent to 50 percent. Unfortunately, the relative humidity found in many homes during the winter months may be only 10 percent to 20 percent, a level too low for many houseplants. Humidifiers are an excellent way to increase the relative humidity in a single room or throughout the entire home.

Simple cultural procedures can also increase the relative humidity around houseplants. Try grouping plants together. The water evaporating from the potting soil, plus water lost through the plant foliage or transpiration, will increase the relative humidity in the immediate vicinity of the houseplants. Another method is to place the houseplants on trays or saucers filled with pebbles or gravel and water. The bottoms of the pots should be above the water level.

Misting houseplants is not an effective method to raise relative humidity. Misting would have to be done several times daily to appreciably raise the humidity level and is simply not practical.

Houseplants require less watering during the winter months than in spring and summer. Actively growing plants need more water than those at

rest during the winter months.

Plant species also affects watering frequency. Ferns prefer an evenly moist soil and should be watered frequently. Cacti and succulents, on the other hand, should not be watered until the potting soil is completely dry. The majority of houseplants fall between these two groups. Most houseplants should be watered when the soil is barely moist or almost dry to the touch. When watering houseplants, water them thoroughly. Water should freely drain out of the bottoms of the pots. If the excess water drains into a saucer, discard the water and replace the saucer beneath the pot.

Houseplants need to be fertilized periodically when actively growing in the spring and summer. Fertilization is generally not necessary during the winter months because most plants are growing very little or resting. Indoor gardeners can begin to fertilize houseplants in March or April as growing conditions improve and the plants resume growth. Fertilizers are available in numerous forms: liquids, water soluble powders, tablets, spikes, etc. Regardless of the fertilizer type, carefully read and follow label directions.

Dust and grease often accumulate on the leaves of houseplants. The dust and grease not only makes them unattractive, it may slow plant growth. Cleaning houseplants improves their appearance, stimulates growth, and may help control insects and mites. Large leafed plants may be cleaned with a moist soft sponge or cloth. Another method is to place the plants in the shower or tub and gently wash the leaves. Be sure to adjust the water temperature before placing the plants under the shower head. (MJF)

Make a Holiday Wreath

A wreath is an attractive, easy-to-make decoration for the upcoming holiday season. Materials needed to construct a wreath include pruning shears, scissors, wreath frame, No. 22 or 24 gauge florist wire, wire cutter and evergreen branches. Decorative materials, such as ribbon, bows, pine cones, holly, various fruits, and ornaments, may be used to finish the wreath.

When selecting a wreath frame, individuals can choose from box wire, crimped wire, styrofoam, and straw frames. An ordinary wire coat hanger may also be fashioned into a small wreath frame. Frames, florist wire and other materials can be purchased at craft or hobby stores.

Evergreen branches can be obtained from the home landscape. A small amount of careful and selective pruning will not harm the trees and shrubs. Greens may also be purchased from garden centers, florist shops and Christmas tree lots or

farms. Additional materials, such as pine cones and bittersweet, can be purchased or collected outdoors.

A 15-inch diameter wreath frame is ideal for most home decorations. Cut the greens into 6- to 8-inch sections. Begin by firmly attaching the end of the wire roll to the frame. Place a small bundle of greens on the frame; then fasten the base of the twigs tightly to the frame with two or three turns of the wire. Position the second bundle of greens so as to cover the base of the first group.

Continue this procedure around the frame, placing the groups close together to produce a thick, full wreath. Tuck the base of the final bundle of greens beneath the foliage of the first group and fasten it to the frame. Decorate the wreath with a bow, cones, ornaments, etc.

Wire each item separately and fasten it to the frame. Finally attach a wire hanger to the top of the wreath frame.

The wreath is now ready for hanging.

When constructing wreaths, use only fresh greens.

Needles on old material will be dry and brittle. Fresh material will have a strong fragrance and pliable needles. Wreaths hung outdoors should remain fresh for 3 to 4

weeks. The average life of an indoor wreath, however, is about 7 to 10 days.

Indoor wreaths should be promptly removed when they become dry. The life of an indoor wreath can be prolonged by hanging it up only during special holiday occasions.

Carefully place the wreath in a cool location, such as a garage, during the remaining time. (MJF)



2002 November/December Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Store chemicals in frost free location	2 Water newly planted bulbs
3	4 Clean up fallen fruit	5 Rake leaves	6 Check stored vegetables and fruits for rot	7	8 Shred leaves for mulch	9 Turn compost pile
10	11	12 Mulch perennial plants	13 Finish garden clean up	14 Water trees and shrubs before ground freezes	15	16
17	18 Clean and repair garden tools	19	20 Pick bag worms from evergreens	21 Mulch strawberry plants	22	23 Prune and mulch roses
24	25	26 Check house plants for insects	27 Check stored bulbs and tubers for rot	28	29 Shop for your favorite gardener	30 Choose a live Christmas tree
1	2 Water Christmas tree daily	3	4 Wash garden gloves	5	6 Check bird feeders	7
8	9	10 Keep poinsettia in a warm, sunny, draft free location	11	12 Update garden journal	13	14 Protect young trees from rabbits by fencing
15	16 Order seed catalogs	17	18 Check landscape plants for snow or wildlife damage	19	20 Wipe dust off houseplant leaves with damp cloth	21
22	23 Do not over water houseplants	24	25	26 Do not walk on frozen lawns	27 Make list of garden supplies needed for next year	28
29	30 Have Christmas tree recycled for mulch	31				

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJF)



Horticulture Information Center

NUFACTS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
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|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| NUFACTS | 137 Deicing Salt Injury | 217 Boston Fern |
| 110 Good City Trees | 210 Amaryllis | 218 African Violet Care |
| 117 Tree Snow Damage | 212 Swedish Ivy | 219 Poinsettia Care |
| 120 Christmas Tree Care | 213 Prayer Plant | 220 Houseplant Leaf Yellowing |
| 124 Wood for Fireplace | 214 Houseplant Insects | 221 Holiday Cactus Blooming |