

Cyclamen Care

Mary Jane Frogge
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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 75 degrees Fahrenheit and a night time minimum temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit should keep it blooming well into next year.



Cyclamen

Iowa State University Extension

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 line.

Indoor Trees

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A houseplant is often thought of as a small, well-kept foliage plant sitting on a windowsill. But many of our common houseplants are full-scale trees in their native habitat. If space is available, large specimens of these plants can be used as indoor trees. Specialty plant stores often have access to large plants that can be used as effective room accents. Or you might consider growing your own.

The **date palm** can grow up to 100 feet outdoors, but a five foot specimen is ideal for indoors. Plants set on a pedestal have a definite tree effect. For optimum growth, place them near any sunny east, south or west window or add supplemental light. Room temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit and moderate humidity are ideal. When old fronds turn yellow, remove them at the trunk with a sharp pruning tool to maintain an attractive stem.

There are several types of Ficus that can provide a wide variety of large specimen plants that quickly grow into tree form. The **fiddle leaf fig** produces leathery, deep green leaves about 15 inches long, with crinkled margins on stout stems. The **common rubber tree** produces slightly smaller, six to eleven inch leaves that are bright olive-green with a touch of red along their straight margin. Well branched specimens of either plant form trees with little effort.

Both the fiddle leaf fig and rubber plant respond well to bright sunny locations, and often drop foliage if light levels drop. Supplemental artificial light will help maintain foliage quality, as will uniform soil moisture. As with the palms, temperatures of 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit and moderate humidity are helpful.

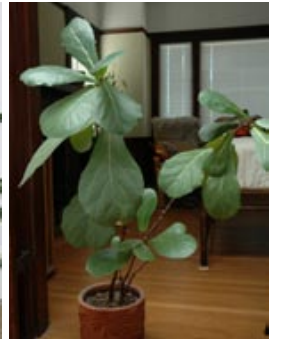
The **weeping fig**, another Ficus, probably has the greatest potential for becoming a satisfactory indoor tree. As the plant matures it branches freely and develops a spreading, tree-like form similar to outdoor landscape trees.

Rapid changes in a weeping fig's environment often causes severe leaf drop. Some leaf drop is normal after the plant is brought home. The severity of the drop can be reduced by making certain the plant receives plenty of bright daytime light and adequate water. Rapid changes may trigger leaf drop after the plant is established, so it is important to be consistent in your treatment of the plant. Washing foliage regularly with a damp cloth will maintain good plant health.

Citrus plants like orange, lemon and grapefruit, are seven to eight feet tall and create tree-like shapes as they branch freely to develop a full crown of



Date palm



Fiddle leaf fig



Common rubber tree



Weeping fig

foliage. Their waxy, bright green leaves are several inches long and remain on the plants all year. Under the right cultural conditions these plants may produce creamy white, sweet-scented flowers and colorful, edible fruit. Like all flowering plants, citrus need plenty of sun, so putting them in an eastern or southern window works well. They need to be kept warm in the winter with temperatures between 65 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you have a vacant corner or bare wall, consider one of these large foliage plants to add color, variety and interest during the year. When summer arrives, these indoor trees can be moved to your outdoor living space, where they will benefit from the additional light and humidity while you enjoy their color and beauty.

Plants that Add Interest or Color to Winter Landscape



Red Osier Dogwood (left) and Yellow Twig Dogwood (right)



Winged Euonymus

Landscapes tend to be dark and gray this time of year, but careful planning can result in subsequent winter gardens being more colorful and interesting. The key is selection of plant material and use of good design. Choose the vantage point from which the garden will be most commonly enjoyed. Select planting sites that are easily seen from this area.

Green is the easiest color to add to a winter landscape with the use of evergreens like **white spruce**, **Douglas-fir** or **Japanese yew**. Of course, parts of the plants other than foliage can be colorful or interesting. Even trees with horizontal branching patterns are interesting if there is snow adding white to the bark color.

Some plants that should be considered for winter landscapes include:

Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*). The young stems of this

plant are bright red during the winter months and become more intensely colored toward spring. Older stems are often pruned out during the spring to encourage more of the young, more brightly colored twigs.

Yellow Twig Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaviramea'). This shrub looks much like Red Osier Dogwood except the twigs are bright yellow rather than red.

Winged Euonymus or Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*). This is the shrub that attracts so much attention in the fall because of the flaming red coloration of the fall foliage. However, the stems are also ornamental in the winter due to their winged characteristics which tend to catch and hold snow.

River Birch (*Betula nigra*). This tree has very interesting bark. The flaky bark is reddish-brown to peach colored and contrasts nicely with snow.



River Birch

Source: Ward Upham, Kansas State Extension

Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH
By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Inspect trees and shrubs for bagworm capsules. Remove and destroy them to reduce next year's pest population.

Be sure not to store apples or pears with vegetables. The fruits give off ethylene gas which speeds up the breakdown of vegetables and will cause them to develop off-flavors.

African violets do well when potted in small pots. A good general rule is to use a pot one-third the diameter of the plant. Encourage African violets to bloom by giving them plenty of light. They can be in a south window during dark winter months. They bloom beautifully under fluorescent lights.

Start reviewing your garden notes to help with next year's plans.

Check fruits, vegetables, corms and tubers that you have in storage. Sort out any that show signs of rot and dispose of them.

Clean power tools of all plant material and dirt. Replace worn spark plugs, oil all necessary parts and sharpen blades. Store all tools in their proper place indoors, never outdoors where they will rust over the winter.

Clean and fix all hand tools. Repaint handles or identification marks that have faded over the summer. Sharpen all blades and remove any rust.

After the ground freezes, mulch small fruit plants such as strawberries. One inch of straw or leaves is ideal for strawberries.

Remove all mummified fruit from fruit trees and rake up and destroy those on the ground. Also, rake and dispose of apple and cherry leaves. Good sanitation practices reduce reinfestation of insects and diseases the following season.

Order seed catalogs now for garden planning in January. For variety, consider companies that specialize in old and rare varieties or wild flowers.

Bring out the bird feeders and stock them with bird seed for the birds. Remember to provide fresh water for them too.

Place Christmas trees away from fireplaces, radiators, heat vents and anything else that could dry the needles. Keep your Christmas tree well watered from the time it is brought home until it is discarded.

Minimize traffic on a frozen lawn to reduce winter damage.

House plants with large leaves and smooth foliage such as philodendrons, dracaena and rubber plant, benefit if their leaves are washed with a damp cloth to remove dust.

A home weather station that includes a minimum-maximum thermometer, a rain gauge and a weather log is a good gift for a gardener.