

The florist cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*) thrives in a temperature range of 40 to 65 degrees and is hardy down to about 38 degrees, making it ideal to use for temporary winter color displays both indoors and out. They will not survive an extended freeze. Many people like to place cyclamen pots in outdoor planters surrounded by ivy, ferns or other winter greenery. If a freeze threatens, just place the pots in a protected area till the temperatures warm up a bit. If the plant gets chilled but doesn't freeze, the leaves may darken and go limp, but the plant will recover when the temperature rises again.

In pots, the tubers will grow in size quickly and it is common for them to reach a diameter of over 6 inches. They appreciate a little organic matter incorporated in the soil, but growing them in a soil with too many nutrients will produce a large quantity of foliage and a plant that looks 'cabbagy'. This lush growth is also very susceptible to botrytis so it is essential that there is adequate ventilation so as to maintain a good flow of air around the plants.

The flowers of florist cyclamen can be white, pink, violet, red, or crimson, usually with a deeper colored zone at the base of the petal. Some varieties are even bi-colored. Leaves are variable but always attractive, being round and green with tracteries or marbling of silver or white.

If you have the plants indoors, they prefer a cool and bright room. Placing the plant on a pebble tray with water will help the blooms last longer (the plant must not sit in the water, but on the pebbles). Cyclamen prefer moderate watering and hate having water stand on the tubers (which are normally visible on the surface of the potting soil). The safest way to water cyclamen is to stand the whole pot in a saucer of water for about 10 minutes, then let it drain. The plant will absorb as much water as it wants, and there's no danger of getting water on the tubers. Never water directly onto the tuber. Cyclamen needs to stay moderately moist.

Use an all purpose liquid fertilizer every two weeks while the plant is in bloom. As the flowers die, remove the dead flowers by pulling off the whole flower stalk. Also pull off any damaged or yellowing leaves to keep your plant groomed. When all the flowers die, the plant can be discarded, or you can give it a dormant period to refresh it. To do that, gradually decrease watering until all the leaves go yellow. Stop watering completely. Keep the tubers still in their pot and place them in a cool location until early fall. When you see the first signs of new growth, repot the tubers in the same pot but using new soil. Keep the pot in a bright but cool location and water sparingly, keeping the potting mixture barely moist (not wet) until the leaves are fully developed. At that point, start treating the cyclamen as a mature plant. With care, you can enjoy years of bright color from a single tuber!