

“It pays rent for eleven months of the year.” E.A. Bowles

Hardy cyclamen naturalizes happily in Northwest gardens. Sky carries several species, all characterized by attractive variegated foliage and butterfly-like flowers in pink, white, or rose. All species thrive in filtered sun or partial shade; they are ideal planted beneath deciduous trees or large shrubs, where they will slowly spread and form drifts several feet across. Cyclamen is not evergreen, but it typically leafs out in the fall, forming an attractive groundcover through the winter, and then goes dormant in summer.

Cyclamen likes a fairly well-drained soil very rich in organic matter, and it benefits from annual topdressing with screened compost and a light feeding of organic fertilizer.

The hardiest and most vigorous species is *Cyclamen hederifolium*, or ivy-leaf cyclamen. The green ivy-shaped leaves are very attractively patterned with white or silver. In late summer or early fall, the plants break their summer dormancy with 3-4” stems topped with rose-pink or white flowers atop the beautiful foliage. It is hardy to below 0° F, making it the best species for colder areas.

Cyclamen coum is nearly as hardy. Its leaves are rounded, round to oval to heart-shaped, and leaf color ranges from all-green, green traced with silver, to all-silver. It flowers in late winter to early spring. Flowers are most typically magenta pink with a darker blotch at the base, but white and pale pink-flowered forms are available. It spreads more slowly than *Cyclamen hederifolium*.

Cyclamen cilicium does best where winter temperatures stay above 10° F. Like *C. coum*, its leaves are rounded to oval, not pointy, but like *C. hederifolium*, it blooms in the fall. Flowers are white to pink with a magenta blotch at the base, and are scented.