



IN COOPERATION WITH COLORADO A&M COLLEGE

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Cyclamen Production Shortened
by

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The demand for well grown cyclamen has been increasing in the past years. There was a time when we all thought azaleas would take over the position of cyclamen, yet we find that from November 10 on to Valentine's Day we can move cyclamen very easily. True, the day of large specimen plants has disappeared; now well-foliaged compact plants in 5½" and 4" standard pots move with ease. I can remember 25 years back when it was not difficult to sell 8" and 10" "cycs" for 12 to 15 dollars apiece. Now we are happy if we can sell them for 5 dollars retail. Therefore, it all adds up to the fact that we must streamline our methods of production and produce well shaped and well flowered plants in a shorter time. We have checked our system on cost of production and can develop a saleable plant at the price of 90 cents per 5½" pot. We use these varieties sown in the proportions given: 40%-Salmon Scarlet (American Improved); 10%-Saffron Red, Silver Edge; 15%-Light Red; 30%-Pink Pearl; 5%-White.

All of the above varieties will start blooming about November 10 except Pink Pearl and White which come in later for Christmas. Pink Pearl, a beautiful compact grower, is a salmon pink with white edging that will be in bloom up to Valentine's Day and is also one of the best keeping varieties in the home.

Sowing of cyclamen seeds is done the week of October 23 in order that our plants be finished in 5½" pots. Seeds for 4" flowering are sown the first week in February. We have two mixtures for the seed flats: Mixture one consists of one part soil, one part peat and one part sand for the October sowing. Mixture two, for the February sowing, is pure neutral peat.

The seed is sown 1" by 1" apart about 1/4" deep in the soil mixture. Our dibble board is made of a flat piece of aluminum with aluminum dibles set to fit the flats which we use. Seed is dropped in these holes. Seed flats are kept at a temperature of 60-65° F. until germination has started and then dropped to 58 degrees F.

With the appearance of the first leaves we start a regular spraying schedule. I cannot stress that too much, as you all know mites have long been the biggest headache in the growing of cyclamen. More "cycs" have been ruined by this pest than by any other. Our schedule calls for spraying every two weeks until November 1. If you have done

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a good job of it, your worries are over by that time.

Several types of insect killers are used. We find that our best and safest is one of the one per cent rotenone sprays. Yes, it is an old timer but it still does our job well for us: 8 ounces to 50 gallons of water. There is no leaf burn or damage to the plant with this spray.

After seed has germinated, usually about January 15 to 20 and 2 or 3 leaves have developed, we transplant seedlings into $2\frac{1}{4}$ " pots. We use the following mixture: 2 parts soil, 1 part peat, 1 part manure, $\frac{1}{2}$ part sand, 1 four-inch pot 6-10-4, and 1 four-inch pot horn shavings. These plants are then placed pot on pot in a well lighted and ventilated house and never allowed to dry out completely. As the plants fill up and before they start to crowd, we pick out all weaklings which we either discard or space together by themselves. The most uniform plants are spaced pot to pot across the bench with three inches between the rows.

Sometime around April 15 these $2\frac{1}{4}$ " plants are ready for a shift into 3" pots. We would like to shift directly into $5\frac{1}{2}$ " pots. However, we lack the room during this time of the year because of our spring plants. Also, we have quite a demand for 3" "cycs" for shipping during the month of June. The same soil mixture as that used for the $2\frac{1}{4}$ " pots is employed.

The spacing for the 3" pot is pot on pot across the bench and about four inches between rows. This spacing is sufficient until the final shift into $5\frac{1}{2}$ " pots the last of June. We believe in spacing at all times because crowding forces foliage stems to grow tall and spindly. Spacing produces short, stocky plants. Every shift should be so that the "cyc" corm is always above the soil level. Burying the corm causes weak leaves and induces corm rot.

May 1, if the weather is hot and bright, we lightly shade until September 15. Too heavy shading causes long and thin leaves, making the plants unshapely. On the other hand not enough shade causes brown dry spots to appear on the plant. At all times during the warm periods we keep plants syringed.

Our soil mixture for the final shift is as follows: 3 parts soil, 1 part manure, 1 part acid peat, $\frac{1}{2}$ part sand, and 1 four-inch pot horn shavings.

All the soil mixtures used are steam sterilized to avoid nematodes and stunt. The soil used in the final shift is low in nitrates to allow the root system to establish itself quickly in this volume of soil. The big secret in this shift is to watch the watering. Over-watering will cause a definite check in growth.

Checking back on our method of growing cycs you will note that we have used a time schedule on all shifts. I would like to stress at this time, if such a schedule is followed, that at no time have your plants become pot bound and hardened. Never during the summer months allow the cyclamen to dry out. A definite growth check is developed from lack of moisture.

Sometime during September all plants are elevated on inverted pots to allow for better circulation around the plant and also to keep roots from running through the drainage hole and taking hold in the bench.

By the end of July and the beginning of August, the plant should have a root system established in $5\frac{1}{2}$ " pots. Now this is the time to start testing soil and to begin a feeding program. A test is necessary every three weeks. With our soil a balanced fertilizer is required until October. At that time buds are beginning to set in the plants and food can be withheld with the exception of nitrogen (N) which may be required.

Disease and insect-free cyclamen plus good healthy well fed plants will sell easily and will last much longer in the home of the ultimate customer. Producing such plants will mean more sales in the years to come for the cyclamen.

In summarizing:

1. Keep them growing.
2. Spray regularly for insects.
3. Shade and ventilate properly.
4. Space properly. Do not overcrowd at any time.
5. Keep corms up.
6. Syringe in summer. Avoid drying out.
7. Test soil and feed correctly.
8. Set plants on inverted pots in September.