

Cyclamen Species

Max Moore

PO Box 3058, Moorabbin East LPO, Moorabin, Victoria 3189

INTRODUCTION

Cyclamen are native to parts of Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa, with the majority of species indigenous to the Mediterranean area. The genus belongs to the family Primulaceae and consists of 19 species which are generally suitable for growing as massed drifts in the garden in dappled shade under trees. Florists cyclamen, which flowers from early autumn to late winter/early spring and are familiar to everyone, are all derived from the species *Cyclamen persicum*. Unfortunately, the majority of species are rare in cultivation.

SPECIES

I intend to highlight eight species which I have some limited experience in growing.

Cyclamen africanum. This species is native to Algeria and can be confused with *C. hederifolium* with which it will cross to produce hybrids. The true species supposedly differs from *C. hederifolium* in that the leaf petioles arise directly from the tuber and that the tuber develops roots over the whole surface instead of just developing from the upper surface of the tuber as is typical of *C. hederifolium*. This species flowers in autumn and ranges in colour from rose pink to light pink.

Cyclamen cilicium. This species is native to the mountains of southern Turkey. The flowers are pale pink and scented and it flowers during autumn to winter. It should grow well in light shade under trees and responds well to an annual mulching of compost.

Cyclamen coum. A widely distributed species, occurring in areas on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, northern and central Turkey, Northern Iran, Syria, and Lebanon. *Cyclamen coum* is probably the second most commonly available species in Australia. The leaves are round and generally dark green, although there are some silver-leaved varieties available. This species flowers during winter and the flowers can vary in colour from white with a crimson eye, to pink and carmine.

Cyclamen graecum. This is a widely distributed Mediterranean species and occurs in Greece and the Greek islands; it also occurs in Cyprus and southwest Turkey. *Cyclamen graecum* grows in sunny rocky areas and has long thick roots unlike any other cyclamen species. The flowers are pink and occur in autumn. It requires warm dry conditions during its dormant period of summer to produce a good crop of flowers.

This species will grow in sunnier spots better than other species, in fact I suspect it will grow in full sun.

Cyclamen hederifolium. A widely distributed species in the Mediterranean area also and its distribution stretches from southeast France to southern Turkey. It is by far the most commonly available species in Australia, flowering in early autumn prior to the growth of the marbled ivy-like leaves which persist throughout the winter and spring.

The flowers vary in colour from white to pink to rose; occasionally scented plants are available. This plant is noted for its scent in the wild but generally the plants in cultivation are not scented.

Cyclamen hederifolium is best planted into shaded areas in the garden, particularly under deciduous trees where it can self seed and eventually form large drifts.

Cyclamen persicum. This is the plant from which all the florists' cyclamen are derived. It is native to the eastern Mediterranean area with plant populations in Algeria and Tunisia.

The flower of the species varies in colour from white and pink to mauve and are sweetly scented; this attribute of scent seems to be missing from most varieties of the hybrids. The species flowers during winter and spring.

Cyclamen purpurascens. This is the most northern occurring species with plant populations in France, Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. This species, with very sweetly scented flowers and evergreen foliage, use to be extensively picked as a cut flower but is now a protected plant, as are all cyclamen species in the wild.

The species flowers in late spring and the colour ranges from light pink to deep rose pink. In cultivation it requires shade and as it occurs naturally in limestone areas, an occasional top dressing of lime would be advantageous.

Cyclamen rohlfsianum. This species is native to Libya. It is distinctive in appearance with dentate leaves which are broader than they are long. The flowers are pink, scented, and slightly larger than those of *C. hederifolium*. The plant flowers in Autumn and the scent is said to resemble that of lily of the valley.

This species is sought after by collectors but it is rare in cultivation.

CULTIVATION AND PROPAGATION

As the majority of cyclamen are native to the Mediterranean area they are well suited to growing in the temperate states of Australia. The plants grow well in pots in shade houses and also naturalised under trees in the garden.

Cyclamen require the following conditions:

- Shaded conditions in summer
- Shelter from winds
- Good drainage
- Dry conditions during dormancy period

The seed of most species ripen in early summer, and should be collected as soon as the seed capsule starts to open. This should be sown immediately into trays of a good quality seed-raising mix into which some coarse sand has been incorporated to improve drainage.

The seedlings generally appear at the same time as the parent plant produces its foliage. Germination of old seed is patchy, but a higher percentage of seedlings may be induced to germinate by soaking the seed for 48 hours in water before sowing it.

The seedling trays should be covered with a pane of glass and placed into an area where the temperature does not rise above 16C. An area in a shade house is ideal. As soon as the seed germinates the glass should be removed from the tray, and the seedlings left to grow on undisturbed for at least one season before being pricked off into small pots. Excess seedlings can be left in trays for a number of years and potted on when needed, without any ill effects.

Cyclamen species have produced few hybrids in the wild or in cultivation. Only four hybrids being substantiated. These are:

C. africanum × *C. hederifolium*

C. balearicum × *C. repandum*

C. creticum × *C. repandum*

C. cyprium × *C. libanoticum*

The species *Cyclamen* should, in theory, be susceptible to all the various pests and diseases that afflict the *C. persicum* cultivars. These include vine weevil, cyclamen mite, aphids, and *Botrytis*, however, these species are relatively untroubled by pests and diseases provided that the plants are not forced too much and become soft.

The Importance of Selection and Root Pruning in Container-Grown Seedling Production of Ornamental Trees and Shrubs

Ian G. McCure

Nerang Native Nursery, Nerang, Queensland 4211

The purpose of this paper is to raise some very important factors which are sometimes overlooked by nursery growers in the raising of tubestock from seed. Certainly many factors are involved in successful production, not the least of which are selection and root pruning in the development of reliable nursery stock. Occasionally in our nursery we come across a plant or a group of plants that stay alive, but do not grow on to a marketable size. In order to ascertain what is wrong the following factors need to be considered:

- The plant origin—50-mm tubestock from a reliable source
- The potting mix used—moisture and nutrient levels
- Problems associated with pests and diseases
- Environmental conditions

In this case everything appears to be satisfactory. The potting mix drains well, there is adequate moisture and nutrient levels, and there is no sign of stem rot or problems with insect pests. The leaves have a slight yellowing but are generally healthy. It's winter time in Queensland, with temperatures for the past 3 weeks between 10 and 25C.

Good growing conditions prevail. It is not until the potting mix is removed from the plants root system that we are aware of the real problem—the root system itself. There are two categories to this problem:

- 1) Root malformations
- 2) Weak root systems

Root malformations are the result of serious kinking and circling of roots which restrict growth and do not allow adequate nutrient uptake. When planted in a landscape situation such plants often die or break at ground level. Root conditions of this type usually commence during transplanting from seedling stage to the tube or pot.