

RECYCLING A CYCLAMEN

Place in a Suitable Spot. Make sure your plant receives bright, indirect light during the day. The flowers will last longer if they are not exposed to direct sunlight. Cyclamens also prefer cool daytime temperatures, ideally no more than 65 degrees. This quality makes them good winter houseplants, assuming you are conservative with the thermostat. They appreciate it even cooler at night, from 40-50 degrees, so it may be necessary to move the plant to an unheated room or cool entryway in the evening. Your plant is getting overheated if the leaves turn yellow quickly and the flower buds wither.

Care. While your Cyclamen is growing and blooming, keep the soil moist but not soggy, watering as soon as the soil surface feels dry. To prevent the tuber from rotting, water gently along the sides of the pot, or water from below, leaving the plant in a saucer of water for about half an hour until the moisture rises to the top of the soil. Discard excess water from the saucer. Every two or three weeks feed the plant with a liquid houseplant fertilizer such as Family Tree General Purpose.

Sometimes Cyclamens are attacked by aphids: small, plump, usually green insects that distort the plant's growth as they suck out its juices. Cyclamen mites are harder to spot because they are tiny and almost transparent, but their damage is easy to recognize: malformed flowers and foliage that is curled into purple, wrinkled cups. Should these pests appear, isolate the plant and treat it with an insecticidal soap.

Let the Plant Go Dormant. By March or early April, your Cyclamen will stop blooming and producing new growth, and the leaves will turn yellow. The plant is entering a natural and necessary dormant period that will last most of the summer. Cut back on water, giving it only enough to keep the soil from becoming bone dry, about every two weeks. Place the pot in a shady, out of the way place for the next month or so and let the foliage dry out.

Repot. In early August, remove the dormant tuber from its pot. Cyclamens bloom more profusely when pot-bound, so replant yours in the same size pot for at least one more year, or, if the tuber has filled the pot, select a container that is an inch or two larger. Cut off any roots clinging to the tuber and rub off as much soil as possible. Prepare a mixture of two parts sterile potting soil, one part peat moss, and one part perlite or sharp builder's sand. Place the tuber with the top half protruding above the soil to protect it from rotting. Firmly pack the soil mix around it.

Water well and place the pot outdoors in the shade. New shoots should appear soon. Water weekly or more frequently, if the weather is hot. Bring the plant indoors well before the first frost and begin fertilizing as before. A glorious display of flowers should appear early in the new year.

