



Look After That Cyclamen

Much is written about the Chrysanthemum being the number one plant as a Living Gift for Mother's Day and it is indeed still hugely popular. But there is another plant that has risen in popularity over the last few years that might soon be claiming the mantle of the most sought after plant as a gift at this time of the year. The plant in question is the Cyclamen.

This curious member of the primrose family bears little resemblance visually but the Cyclamen is related to these pretty little woodland perennials. Originating from the Mediterranean areas, the name is derived from the Greek word *kyklos* which means circle and refers to the round disc shaped flat corm. The rather unflattering name of Sow or Swine Bread was used in ancient times as wild boars used to favor eating the corms.

This is not advised as they are inedible to humans!

The Cyclamen comes in many forms from the tiny little plants that can smother hillsides in Greece during spring to the wonderfully showy large flowered plants that are for sale in garden centres. Cyclamen can be raised from seed however it is a slow process and needs patience. If planting out the miniature flowered varieties, seedlings of these are available in punnets. These are ideally suited to planting out in bowls or troughs by a front door, patio, balcony etc. They will take full winter sun but need protection thereafter. These delightfully scented Cyclamen can also be planted out in the garden.

Most of the smaller flowered Cyclamen have a fragrance which is an added appeal to these long flowering beauties. Being used to cold northern winters they hate the heat and the worst thing you can do is to have your potted Cyclamen in a hot winter room! A cold, even frosty spot is best, so try and find somewhere chilly for this pot plant. A few other tips: When flowers have died do not cut them off. The remaining stem will rot back into the corm. Grab the stem low down and give a sharp pull and the whole stem will pull clean away from the corm. You will get better flowering if you do this. The same thing is done for ageing leaves. Water from top or bottom but keep the corm dry if top watering. Add a few drops of a liquid fertilizer each time you water.

Once the Cyclamen has finished – and they all have their day eventually, take the plant outside, place it in the shade and allow it to die back naturally. Cyclamen generally have a dormant period through late spring into summer and then can regenerate again in autumn. Once the plant has died back, tip the pot on its side to keep the corm dry for a few months. You can have a go at 'growing' it again later on or go to your local garden center and buy another of these simply stunning indoor/outdoor flowering beauties.

They bloom for so many months so have to be one of the best flowering bargains around.

Life's a garden – dig it!