

# Cyclamen Season

## A Flowering Houseplant That Requires Very Little Care

Cyclamen is a small but diverse genus of plants. Many species are hardy, generally in USDA Zones 7 and above. But *Cyclamen persicum* is often seen for sale throughout the fall and winter, in less hardy zones, as a houseplant. *C. persicum*, aptly referred to as the Florist's Cyclamen, has sweet scented small (½ to ¾ inch) flowers that are produced on long stems, held upright above the foliage. It is a tuberous perennial with heart shaped leaves common to cyclamen. You can find Florist cyclamen in shades of pink, red, magenta, lavender, deep purple and white. Even this cyclamen's foliage is attractive, often having silver marbling on the top sides of the leaves. The entire plant, when in flower, reaches only about 8 inches high.



Cyclamen persicum 'mini' 'Lilbreto Pink'

Florist cyclamen can be grown outside, but it is questionable it will survive if temps go below 50 degrees F. / 10 degrees C. It is a native of the Mediterranean and North Africa. When grown outside, expect *Cyclamen persicum* to bloom in late winter or early spring. Greenhouse cyclamen are usually forced into bloom sometime around the holiday season into late winter.

### Care

**Potting Soil:** Cyclamen persicum does best planted in a soil-based potting mix, with the top of the tuber just slightly above the soil line.

### Water:

- When leaves are present, the plant is actively growing. Water whenever the soil feels dry. Avoid getting water on the crown of the plant.
- As the flowers begin to fade, gradually allow the plant to

dry out for 2-3 months. It's going into a dormant stage (see below) and any excess water will cause the tuber to rot.

- New growth will probably start to appear around September. At this point, resume watering and feeding. Bring it back indoors before the cold weather.

**Humidity:** High humidity, especially during winter, is crucial. Keep the cyclamen on a tray of water with a layer of pebbles or something else to form a shelf for the cyclamen pot to sit on. Do not let the cyclamen itself sit in the water.

**Fertilizer:** Feed with a low-nitrogen fertilizer every couple of weeks while in full leaf.

**Light:** Give cyclamen [bright, indirect light](#) in the winter. While your plant is dormant during the summer, keep it out of bright light.

**Temperature:** Cyclamen do not like heat, but they are not frost hardy. Do not expose to temperatures below 50 degrees F. Avoid drafts as well as hot, dry air.

### Dormancy Period:

- Cyclamen generally go dormant for the summer. They don't like the lack of rain and excess heat, so they take a siesta. By April cyclamen start getting tired and the leaves will begin to yellow and die. When they go fully dormant depends on their growing conditions. If they are houseplants and the heat is kept high, they'll peter out more quickly. On the other hand, some don't ever appear to go fully dormant.
- During the summer, dormant cyclamen can be kept indoors, in a cool, dark spot with good air circulation or outdoors, in a shady spot. If you put yours outdoors, be sure to turn the pot on its side to keep the rain out. If the soil gets too wet during dormancy, the tuber will rot. A little water isn't going to do any harm, but you don't want the soil to remain wet.
- You can repot with fresh soil and a slightly larger pot while the plant is dormant.
- Begin watering again in September. By then you'll probably be seeing new growth starting.
- Make sure you bring the pot back indoors before a frost.

There are many wonderful cyclamen hybrids available and since they stay in bloom for a long period, you can choose your plant while the blossoms are open and know exactly what you are getting. Some notable varieties to look for are:

Sierra Series: Larger flowers (2-3 inches) white, pink, salmon, scarlet, lilac and purple. 'Scentsation' is open pollinated with a strong fragrance, pinks and reds. 'Victoria' open pollinated, ruffled white flowers with red mouths and margins.