

# cyclamen



Photo courtesy of Morel Cyclamen  
by Emmanuel Ulzega

## BOTANICAL NAME

*Cyclamen persicum*  
(SICK-la-men PURSE-i-kum)

## COMMON NAME

Florist's *Cyclamen*  
(SY-kla-men, as a common name)

## DESCRIPTION

*Cyclamen* plants bear distinctive five-petaled blooms atop smooth, slender, leafless stems. The blooms are downward pointing but strongly reflexed; waxy; and sometimes ruffled, serrated or edged with a contrasting color. They rise above a dense base of fleshy heart-shaped or kidney-shaped leaves, which are often variegated (usually dark green with light green or silvery gray markings although some varieties feature silver leaves with green highlights).

## COLORS

*Cyclamens* are available in red, magenta, fuchsia, rose, pink, salmon, purple, lavender, lilac, white and bicolors.

## DECORATIVE LIFE

*Cyclamens* typically bloom from three to five weeks, sometimes longer (new blooms replace the old). Once flowering stops, the leafy plants can survive for several more months.

## AVAILABILITY

*Cyclamens* are available year-round from various growers, but peak availability is approximately from October through March.

## in-store and consumer care

**LIGHT** Place *Cyclamens* in a bright environment but out of direct sunlight. During the winter months, however, these plants can tolerate exposure to direct sunlight for 1 hour to 2 hours daily.

**WATER** Keep plants moderately moist — not soaked — at all times. Water thoroughly when the soil surface is dry to the touch. *Cyclamens* are extremely sensitive to both underwatering and overwatering, so never allow plants to dry out and wilt, and, conversely, never allow the pots to sit in water for prolonged periods.

Ideally, place pots in a shallow container of tepid water for 15 to 30 minutes (the soil will absorb water from the holes in the bottom of the pots), then allow them to drain. If you water from the top, drip water just inside the edges of the pot to avoid getting water in the plants' crown, on the tuber or on the leaves.

**TEMPERATURE / AIR** These plants prefer cool environments — preferably 60 F to 65 F during the daytime and 50 F to 60 F at night. Placing *Cyclamens* in a warm room or near heat sources will shorten their life dramatically. Also, these plants like fresh air, so placing them outdoors for a few hours a day, when temperatures allow, is beneficial.

**HUMIDITY** When flowering, *Cyclamens* require high humidity. Place pots on a pebble tray, making sure the bottoms of the pots are out of the water. Also occasionally mist the air around the plants.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Although *Cyclamens'* sensitivity to ethylene gas varies from slight to extreme, you should purchase only plants that are treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the grower or during shipping. Flower wilting, shriveling, drying and/or drop are the effects of exposure to ethylene.

**FERTILIZER** To help buds open, feed *Cyclamens*

every two weeks with a high-phosphorous plant food mixed at half strength. Do not feed dormant plants.

**GROOMING** Remove blooms as they fade and leaves as they yellow or dry, carefully cutting, twisting or pinching the stems off at the crown.

**REBLOOMING** Many people discard *Cyclamens* when they begin to deteriorate, but they often can be brought back into bloom. After flowering, gradually reduce watering until the soil becomes dry, allow the foliage to die down, then clip it off. Place the dormant plant in a cool, bright room, providing just enough water to keep the roots from drying out completely. Then repot the plant in fresh soil as soon as new growth appears, leaving half the tuber above the soil surface. Gradually resume regular watering as the leaves develop (over two to four months). Blooms will follow.

## purchasing tip

■ Buy *Cyclamen* plants that have several well-developed buds that are showing color and, possibly, an open bloom or two.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The genus name *Cyclamen* is presumably from the Greek word "kylos," meaning circle, possibly in reference to the rounded tubers. The species name "*persicum*" means of Persia, referring to the nativity of this species of *Cyclamen*.

**ALL IN THE FAMILY** *Cyclamen* is a member of the *Primulaceae* (primrose) family. Besides primroses, relatives include loosestrife (*Lysimachia*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** These plants are native to the eastern Mediterranean region and Western Asia, including the countries of Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Iran. **sf**



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