



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Add Some Cheer with Cyclamens (December 25, 2021)

by Pam Wallace, UCCE Master Gardener

Now that gray winter days are here, it's time to start thinking of ways to add color to the garden. What I miss most during winter is flowers in the yard. But I found an answer to those dull winter landscape doldrums.

Potted cyclamens in cheerful shades of white, pink, rose, and red line the shelves in stores this time of year. Their colorful flowers resemble shooting stars or butterflies.

Cyclamen can make a great Christmas or hostess gift. But how many of you have bought a cyclamen or received it as a gift, placed it on your porch, and then thrown it away in the summer when it died back? Did you know that the cyclamen is a bulb (technically, a tuber) that will grow year after year? And did you realize that cyclamen can also be grown in the landscape?

Plant a grouping of cyclamen in shades of red and white outside a window where their Christmas cheer can be enjoyed from inside during cold foggy weather.



The foliage of cyclamen is attractive on its own. Each plant forms a basal clump of heart-shaped dark green leaves with silver veining or mottling. Their small size makes them perfect to plant under trees or large shrubs where they'll receive dappled shade and be protected from the afternoon sun.

Cyclamen enjoy the cooler weather of winter and will usually become dormant in summer. During their dormant season it is important to use infrequent watering. They do need to be watered, but too much can result in bulb rot. According to the Iowa State University Extension, "Watering is a little tricky because they prefer moist soils, but do not tolerate wet soils."

Cyclamen are prolific bloomers. Each mature plant can send out as many as thirty long-lasting flowers. The key for prolonging their bloom is cooler temperatures and moist soil. They bloom during late fall and spring, although I've found that during a mild winter, they'll bloom for most of the season.

Cyclamen are versatile and remarkably easy to grow, and are resistant to most pests. Another added plus for those living in the foothills is that they are not attractive to deer.



Here are some tips on their care:

- **Potted plants** - transplant them into rich, organic, well-drained soil or a bigger pot to the same depth they were originally planted.
- **Tubers** - plant them 6 to 10 inches apart to a depth of 1 inch. Cover with a mere half-inch of soil during dormant periods of June-August.

- Find a spot in your yard that has morning sun and afternoon shade in the hot summer months, such as the north or east side of the house.
- They prefer moist, well-drained soil that can partially dry out between waterings.
- Cyclamen will bloom in shade, as in a north-facing exposure, or under evergreen trees, although a little bit of sunlight increases the amount of blooms.
- Plants lose leaves and go dormant in hot weather, but survive if drainage is good and soil is not constantly wet. They are susceptible to root rot at this stage.

So next time you see a cyclamen in the store, don't pass it up because you don't know what to do with it. Grab it up, take it home with you and plant it in your yard. You'll be glad you did when those drab winter doldrums hit and you can look out your window and see a bright spot of cheer in colorful blooms.

The Tulare-Kings County Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions:

Visalia Farmer's Market- 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears Building)

Hurley Garden Fruit Trees Pruning Demo - Sat., Jan 22, 1-3 pm, Hurley Elementary School, Visalia

Public Rose Pruning Demonstrations:

January 17, 2022, 10:00 to 1:00 pm, Old Grangeville Church, Hanford

January 22, 2022, 10:00 to 11:00 am, Ralph Moore Rose Garden, Hall and Main Street, Visalia

January 22, 2022, 10:00 to 1:00 pm, Woodlake Botanical Garden

Questions?

Call us: Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30

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