



CARE SHEET FOR CYCLAMEN HEDERIFOLIUM

The dominant feature of the gardens are the towering trees. These both define the garden and dictate what will grow well in their dry shade/part shade. One genus we've had success with is cyclamen. The two main species in the garden are *C. hederifolium* and *C. coum*. The former flowers summer into autumn, while the latter flowers in the depths of winter. This care sheet will deal with *C. hederifolium*.

When we came to the garden, it already had a considerable number of this plant. Ed Dunn most likely got his 'starter' plants from fellow gardeners and the Arboretum Plant Sale. Once established, this species will seed in, though never in an alarming fashion.

If in doubt about where to site/what conditions this plant needs, take a look online and read up on where it is native (an arc across southern Europe).

The disc shaped tubers can become quite large with age, up to a foot across! We've found that ones which are buried too deep (more than three inches), or that sit on top of the ground, won't flower as well. Sort of like Goldilocks and her porridge; the planting depth needs to be just right (say an inch or two below a duff laden surface-as this allows enough radiant heat to get through).

Decades ago *C. hederifolium* would start to flower as summer slid into early autumn, usually commencing in the latter part of August and early September. Nowadays a number of them start to flower just after the summer solstice in early July. We find this change slightly disturbing from a gardeners point of view because their companion/over-story plants are likely still in foliage keeping the blossoms from view.

There is a wide range of foliar patterning and shape: the leaves will range from a mixture of zones of deep, dark green, to ones entirely covered in a silver sheen; and from a many pointed shape, through a simple heart to an elongated narrow heart with several points. However, we are getting ahead of ourselves here, as the flowers emerge before the foliage does. An older, well grown plant can have several hundred flowers, over the course of the season. Most plants offer little or no fragrance, while some are wonderfully perfumed. We get two to three months of bloom, depending on the weather. As the flowers die down, the fertilized seed capsules swell up, and are pulled down into a tight curlicue. When the seed is ripe, ants will often 'break' into the capsules, carrying the seeds off. They usually don't get too far, but on occasion we've found seedling far from any parent plant. As the flowers taper off, leaves emerge. The foliage carries through the winter into spring, and as most plants come to life, *C. hederifolium* starts to die down.

If you find seedlings amongst a parent plant, you can gently dig them out, transplanting them to a safe location. Often we'll give them a half strength solution of liquid fertilizer, for the first year or two, as this will help bulk up the plant quickly. Be aware that cutworms can be a menace, and Bt or 'Sluggo Plus' will come in handy, for control.

Where to plant; near the sunny base of large conifers, in dusty, summer dry open spaces and other partially shaded spots. Just remember that these plants don't want large, rambunctious perennial neighbors.