



THE BULB GARDEN

Newsletter of the Pacific Bulb Society

Volume 7, Issue 1

April, 2008

This quarter we have three delightful articles about Cyclamen, each showing us a different perspective about the species. Robin has grown them for sale for many years. Her article describes how she cultivates them from seedling to mature corms. Brian discusses them from a connoisseur's point of view. His enjoyment of their exquisite features is apparent. Part Two of his article will be of interest to the taxonomy buffs among us, and will be published in the summer edition of "The Bulb Garden." Judy lovingly describes a 'found' cyclamen which has been with her for 35 years. The authors and PBS board members have generously supplied photos for this issue. For more beautiful Cyclamen pictures, check out both our Wiki and John Lonsdale's web site: http://www.edgewoodgardens.net/Plants_album/The%20Complete%20Collection/Primulaceae/Cyclamen/index.html

CONTRIBUTORS:

Brian Mathew was for 25 years a botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew where he specialised in the petaloid monocotyledons, that group of plants loosely termed 'bulbs'. In 1993 he became Editor of Curtis's Botanical Magazine, which at 220 years is the longest-running illustrated botanical periodical. His 20 books include *The Iris* (1981), *The Genus Crocus* (1982), *Hellebores* (1989), *The Smaller Bulbs* (1987), *Growing Bulbs* (1997) and *Bulbs: The Four Seasons* (1998). He is a recipient of Sir Michael Foster Award from the British Iris Society, the Warburton Trophy from the American Iris Society, the Herbert Memorial Medal from the International Bulb Society, the Victoria Medal of Honour from the RHS and in 2005 was presented with an MBE by HM Queen Elizabeth. Brian's article begins on page 4.

Robin Hansen has grown and sold Cyclamen for several years and also grows Brodiaea, Lithophragma, Camas, Romanzoffia, Geranium tuberosum, Tritileia, and other Oregon native geophytes. Cyclamen remain her passion, but she loves those cute little Brodiaeas, too! She lives in North Bend, Oregon just east of the Pacific Ocean on a property sheltered by conifers (slightly colder and hotter than USDA zone 9). Her nursery is established on her home property. If you have questions about her article or want to receive her plant list, please send an e-mail to hansennursery@coosnet.com.

Judy Glattstein finds gardening to be a never-ending story, always with something more to learn. She has cleverly combined her avocation and vocation, pairing her fascination with plants and gardens with her classes at the New York Botanical Garden and other institutions, and lectures to garden clubs and professional horticultural organizations across the United States and abroad. Judy has authored nine books, three of which are about bulbs. Her magazine articles often focus on bulbs too. Judy's New Jersey garden (like every garden "a work in progress") is in USDA zone 6, just a couple of miles east of the Delaware River. She adores sturdy geophytes, and has planted over 40,000 that thrive in her rocky, clay soil woodland in western New Jersey, especially those resistant to deer. Visit her at www.bellewood-gardens.com.

GROWING CYCLAMEN IN THE WESTERN US

By Robin Hansen

I never know whether to be amused or dismayed when I read an article such as the one in the *San Francisco Chronicle* a couple of months ago. The person quoted was an "easterner." Her comments on growing did not acknowledge the climatic differences we have here in the West, i.e. wet, cold, snowy winters and dry, cool, hot or foggy

summers. The East Coast, which for the most part has moisture year-round, also has much higher humidity in the summer.

As many PBS members are here in the West, I'll write about some basics on growing Cyclamen here. While germination of seed is excellent when sown fresh, old seed, particularly that stored properly in a refrigerator, is viable for a number of years. It just takes longer to germinate.

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GROWING CYCLAMEN IN THE WESTERN US

By Robin Hansen

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Some people soak it before planting; others don't bother. I don't soak seed, since I soak the seed trays at planting. Either way works.

For containers, I use a basic soil mix consisting of pumice, fine bark, compost and a bit of soluble fertilizer that comes from Rexius in Eugene. Any good mix that drains well is fine. If you have doubts about drainage, add some pumice. I add anywhere from a teaspoon to a tablespoon of bone meal to each container, stirring it into the soil mix before planting the tubers. I only use pumice for drainage, as other materials break down easily, float or (in the case of builder's sand) weigh too much, pack and may hold excessive moisture.

I've pricked seedlings out when they have one leaf, when they're two years old or more, or when they're several years old and have been in flats for some time.



Cyclamen repandum
Photo by Mary Sue Ittner

I have more difficulty with survival of mature tubers whose roots have entwined than I do with single-leaf seedlings, possibly because of root loss in the transplant process. The most important part of transplanting is using an appropriate-size container, which should provide tight or somewhat crowded roots. With tiny seedlings, anywhere from six to ten in a 3 or 4-inch pot works; a 1/4" to 1/2"

tuber would go in a pot about 2-inch square by 2 or 3 inches tall, depending on the amount of root mass, or 4 would fit in a 3- or 4-inch pot. It's flexible; don't overwater, but do keep the containers shady and cool.

For the tiniest Cyclamen such as *baleraricum*, *intaminatum*, *trocopteranthum* (aka *alpinum*) etc., a permanent container may be best, especially if you only have a few. For most others, good locations are dry areas under conifers, shrubs or trees that are not watered on a regular basis, on the north side of rocks in a rock garden or the north side of a building. For those of you new to growing Cyclamen, I always suggest trying *hederifolium* or *coum*, followed by *repandum*, *cilicium*, or *africanum* and *persicum* in very mild climates. Cyclamen grow in a variety of soils with various nutrient levels. Very little fertilizer is ever necessary, feed with a bit of bone meal now and then, if you remember. They go dormant in summer (except *purpurascens*).

Species *persicum* does not make a good houseplant unless the light levels are high and the temperatures are cool. I'm often asked if any of the Cyclamen can be grown in the house. My usual recommendation is no; what we think of as high light levels are not enough. Cold frames, shaded greenhouses, and gardens are much better locations.

Cyclamen intaminatum is exquisite in a tufa trough as is *balearicum* (if the climate is mild); *coum* is too vigorous. Provided you repot every year or two and add some bone meal, all Cyclamen do as well in containers as in the ground. Even the least hardy will survive colder temperatures in the ground than you might imagine, if they are not thoroughly wet when the cold hits. No plant is really as hardy in a container as it is in the ground and Cyclamen does need some protection in winter.

I've seen Cyclamen in garden centers, and wouldn't buy them except in full growth. Too often, the tubers are soft; chances are high that they will rot when potted up and watered.

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GROWING CYCLAMEN IN THE WESTERN US

By Robin Hansen

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Soft tubers, in my experience, rarely survive. I've done my share of failing to water and then trying to resuscitate Cyclamen. When I push a finger in the pot to check them, I encounter Cyclamen mush. This feels about like accidentally grabbing a slug when you pick up a pot!

Two Cyclamen, *repandum* and *purpurascens*, do best buried several inches down, in full shade. They require more moisture year-round, particularly *purpurascens* which grows in areas such as the Austrian Alps. *Coum* and *hederifolium* are probably the most moisture-tolerant, provided they have good drainage. In fact, *graecum* demands it in order to bloom and set seed with any regularity. Both of these have very thick roots that grow deeply to reach moisture. *Graecum* and *persicum* tolerate the most sun; in fact, *graecum* demands it in order to bloom and set seed with any regularity. Both of these have very thick roots that grow deeply to reach moisture.

And back to the beginning – Cyclamen seed is mature anywhere from 6-12 months after bloom, usually from June through August. You will know the seeds are ripe if the round, brown seedpods are soft when gently squeezed. Let them dry a few days after picking, then separate the seeds from the pods, dry for a few days more and refrigerate in plastic bags or containers. Be sure to mark the date of harvest on the container. Seed needs darkness to germinate well; one-fourth inch of soil is enough. I sow usually in mid to late fall and in March and early April, earlier or later depending on temperature which should be in the mid-50s for best germination. Prick out seedlings when you want. For maximum germination, keep the seed trays at least two years and for some Cyclamen such as *repandum*, up to four years.



Cyclamen hederifolium seeds

Photo by Robin Hansen

This article is a very brief overview of a genus that is quite reliable and long-lived. There is at least one species blooming at any time of the year, but *coum* is my favorite for brilliant long-lasting color from late December through March. A trip through the greenhouse or the garden in the nasty weather of January will give you encouragement and raise your spirits. And they are long-lasting cut flowers!



Cyclamen coum

Photo by Robin Hansen

CYCLAMEN, A GENUS FOR GARDENER AND BOTANIST ALIKE

By Brian Mathew

One small genus has sustained the interest of an international specialist society, now 1600 members strong, for 30 years. Why? What is it that so captivates the botanical and horticultural communities?

All would agree that Cyclamen are undoubtedly beautiful plants with their characteristic pendent flowers and gracefully swept-back petals. That in itself is reason enough to grow them but there is a lot more to it than that. I think part of the answer lies in their extraordinary propensity for variation within each species. There are perhaps just 20 species (the jury is still arguing over that). Even if each of those produced only ten variants on average, the numbers would take on a different scale. As anyone who has cultivated *C. persicum* or *C. hederifolium* is well aware, the variations are actually almost infinite.

The more striking of these variations centre on the flower colour, mainly in the depth of pink-purple colouration. There are also white forms of most species and not all these are the same. Another variation is the shape and intensity of markings around the mouth of the corolla, if they are present at all. Some species or selections of species lack those markings altogether.



Cyclamen mirabile
Photo by Mary Sue Ittner

When you incorporate flower size, overall shape, and the degree of twist of the petals, the number of possibilities begins to escalate enormously. That doesn't even include such subtleties as perfume. Of course, then there is the foliage. In the case of most species this, too, is hugely variable in shape and zonal markings on the upper surface. Leaf colour ranges from more-or-less plain green through silver or grey-green to wholly pewter. Only 20 species? But how many thousands of possible variants?



Cyclamen cilicium cardamine
Photo by Arnold Trachtenberg

These need not be one-off variations as the selections can be increased by seed. Vegetative propagation has so far proved commercially impractical (and is probably unnecessary anyway). This has not been a barrier to the establishment of cultivars, or at least fairly true-breeding strains: not clonal of course, but tolerably uniform. This in itself is interesting and can probably be explained by self-fertility. Most cyclamen appear to be very self-fertile. This is easily confirmed by isolating a plant from any outside influence. A lot of growers keep their special plants under glass and it is not unusual to have only one specimen of a species in flower. In spite of this, seed set is often just as good as when the plant is growing in a batch of others. With a few years of selection almost pure-breeding can be produced.

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Cyclamen, a genus for gardener and botanist alike

By **Brian Mathew**

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Cyclamen mirabile Tilebarn Nicholas
Photo by Mary Sue Ittner

Peter Moore, the English cyclamen nurseryman par excellence, has demonstrated this with his 'Tilebarn' selections, as have Ashwood Nurseries. A particularly good example is the pure white-flowered (i.e. without the purple-stained corolla mouth) *C. coum* forma *albissimum*, the stocks of which are derived from one wild-collected individual. A certain amount of rogue-ing is necessary in the early generations but very soon a true-breeding stock can be achieved.

Perhaps this is sufficient comment on the horticultural excellence of cyclamen but one might also add that the species usefully flower at different times of the year, from late summer to late spring. In fact some enthusiasts claim to have flowers in every month of the year. So much then for the horticultural aspects: it is hardly surprising that the Cyclamen Society has 1600 members world-wide. It should be many more given the credentials of these fascinating plants!

[To be Continued. Read Part 2 of Brian's article: Taxonomy and World-Wide Distribution of Cyclamen in the Summer Issue of The Bulb Garden.]



Cyclamen coum
Photo by Mary Sue Ittner

A METHUSELAH CYCLAMEN

By **Judy Glattstein**

In 1973, my parents found a lonely cyclamen on the side of an Israeli road. It had apparently fallen out of the bank after some maintenance work. When they returned to the United States after a visit with my sister and her family, they brought the *Cyclamen persicum* tuber to me as a present. In those pre-CITES days there were no restrictions, and I did have a plant import permit. If memory serves, my father was sent to the rest room to rinse the tuber off and clean it up a bit more.

At the time, I lived in Norwalk, Connecticut. The well-traveled tuber was potted up and kept under fluorescent grow lights in the basement, where it resided for the next few years. Several years later, we moved to Wilton, the next town over. Of course, the cyclamen came with me. The grow light set-up became more elaborate. My husband built a 7-foot tall rack of 2-inch by 4-inch lumber, with three shelves of hardware cloth (1/2-inch wire mesh) for better air circulation. Each shelf was lit with a four-tube, 4-foot long fluorescent unit. I use two cool-white and two warm-white bulbs for each unit. The cyclamen continued to grow and flower quite nicely.

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In 1995, we moved 125 miles west, to New Jersey, accompanied by the cyclamen and a number of other plants. Now it had a place in a spare bathroom with a west-facing window, kept on the downright chilly side except when we had houseguests. This seemed to be to its liking as it continued its cycle of dormancy, growth and flowering.

In 1999, I had a lean-to greenhouse installed. Primarily intended for geophytes, it is kept on the cool side with the thermostat set for 50 degrees Fahrenheit night temperature.

I generally top-dress every other year or so, shortly before I expect growth to begin in early fall. Completely repotting is done rather infrequently. Back in 2001, while repotting the cyclamen I measured the tuber. Somewhat irregular in form, it is 6 inches long by 5 inches wide, with a very bumpy, irregular surface due to all the floral trunks that cover the upper surface. When in growth, the leaves spread over more than 12 inches and there are dozens of flowers.

Does anyone have information on the longevity of cyclamen? I have had this particular cyclamen for 35 years and it was not an infant when I received it. Is this a geriatric cyclamen? Are there any suggestions for improved care? Any comments or suggestions are appreciated.



Cyclamen persicum
Photo by Judy Glattstein

Income Statement – 2007

BALANCE 1/1/07		\$18,110.24
INCOME		
U.S. Members	\$ 3,810.00	
Overseas Members	750.00	
Contributions	115.00	
BX Receipts	4,779.42	
Bulb Meeting Receipts	489.00	
Investment Gains	2,294.03	
TOTAL INCOME		12,237.45
EXPENSES		
BX/SX Expense	1,273.86	
Renewal requests	258.57	
Publications		
Newsletters	975.46	
Directories	309.71	
Total Publications	1,285.17	
Printer Repair	185.00	
Bulb Meeting Travel	259.60	
Bulb Meeting Expenses	825.02	
Office Supplies	111.00	
Adjustment	(1.18)	
TOTAL EXPENSES		4,197.04
NET INCOME		\$ 8,040.41
BALANCE 12/31/07		\$26,150.65

Bulb Exchange Report

The Pacific Bulb Society BX (seed and bulb exchange) will soon celebrate its fifth anniversary. As of March 2008, there have been 166 postings of plant materials on offer. In addition there have been a number of special sales. All of this activity happens because of our generous donors and I thank them.

Along with the education and pleasure that we PBS members gain from trying to grow new plants, we help the cause of conservation by propagating and distributing uncommon species. Another way in which we can be friendly to our natural world is by recycling the materials that we use for packing and distributing our botanical treasures.

I am proud to say that I have never had to buy Styrofoam peanuts because I always know plenty of people who have lots to get rid of. It would not be practical for all of you to send me your leftover peanuts for recycling, but I can also re-use "gently worn" padded envelopes and deconstructed corrugated paper boxes. So, help Mother Nature, the PBS, and yourselves by sending flattened packing containers to me, and you will receive credit for your postage on future BX orders. Please limit your donations to the same small sizes of envelopes and cartons in which you have received BX shipments.

Happy growing!

Dell Sherk

KUDOS TO THE WIKI AND FORUM TEAMS

One goal that Pacific Bulb Society began with was to become an educational resource to folks interested in gardening with bulbs. Mary Sue Ittner and others took the basic concept of providing a WEB site filled with information, and developed the PBS WIKI – the encyclopedia of geophyte notes and photos. Over the years, many volunteers have worked to put the WIKI in place and keep it running smoothly. Currently, the WIKI administration team consists of Jay Youch, Linda Foulis, and Mary Sue Ittner. Jay provides strong technical support, while all team members work to keep the WIKI spam-free, and filled with the wonderful photographs and information provided by forum participants.

Forum contributors range from beginners just learning what a geophyte is to serious professional growers, and botanists. Many volunteers have kept the forum running smoothly. The current Forum administration team members are Mary Sue Ittner, Arnold Trachtenberg and Diane Whitehead.

The PBS Board recognizes and appreciates the efforts of Jay, Linda, Arnold, Diane, Mary Sue and many others who previously volunteered on these teams. Thank you, all, for giving so generously of your time and talents.

Minutes PBS Board Meeting

Dear PBS Members,

Your Board of Directors has been hard at work of late. We have fallen behind in some of our promises to our members, and we spent our March 9, 2008 meeting discussing ways to rectify the situation.

We were thrilled to welcome Marguerite English back as newsletter editor. She will be coordinating with Treasurer Arnold Trachtenberg and the rest of the board to collect and edit stories, match them with photographs, and coordinate publication. Her election to the position of editor was unanimous. In order to ensure that our newsletter can take a significant step forward in quality, the board allotted up to \$100 for Marguerite to use to pry a few extra articles out of our members' hands and minds. We know that we've got some experts out there. We would really appreciate your contributions, and we're ready to offer a small stipend, to be arranged with Marguerite, for articles that appear in the newsletters. So get those fingers a-typing!

Our vote to accept the resignation of Vice President Shawn Pollard was also unanimous. Though we are extremely sad to lose his contributions on the board, we deeply appreciate his hard work. We hope that he may be able to rejoin us in the future.

We also began to make plans for our next election. On November 15, 2008, PBS members will have a chance to vote for President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. We will organize a nominating committee and

polling procedures at our next meeting. In the meantime, if anyone is interested in serving in these positions, please feel free to self-nominate!

We remain in awe of Dell's hard work and dedication as BX Director. As many of you know, he recently organized a purchase of seeds from Silverhill Seeds in South Africa for redistribution via the BX. The sale was such a success that the board authorized up to \$500 for similar purchases throughout the year. If anyone has suggestions or requests, feel free to share them with Dell. And yes, he is doing everything he can to track down the seeds for the white Worsleya, so no need to email him that request.

Finally, the board agreed that our tax exempt status has got to be a priority. After completing and submitting our forms last year, we have heard nothing from the IRS. As treasurer, Arnold offered to restart this process and see it through to the next stage. All of us who have had any dealings with the IRS know just how much of a debt we owe to Arnold!

We look forward to a very productive year. Please feel free to share your comments or suggestions with any of us. If you haven't been very involved in PBS thus far, this is a great time to make a change. We're going to have a wide selection of seeds available through the BX, a new-look newsletter that is hungry for articles, and if you've ever dreamed of serving on the board of directors of a garden society, your dreams just may come true this November!

Sincerely,
Jennifer Hildebrand
Secretary, PBS

Pacific Bulb Society Officers and Board of Directors

- President: Cathy Craig
CathyCraigEA@hotmail.com
- Vice President:
- Secretary: Jennifer Hildebrand
TheOtherJen8@Yahoo.com
- Treasurer: Arnold Trachtenberg
Arnold@nj.rr.com
- Forum and Wiki: Mary Sue Ittner
MSIttner@mcn.org
- Membership: Pat Colville
Pat.Colville@JHResearchusa.com
- BX Director: Del Sherk
DellS@voicenet.com
- Newsletter: Marguerite English
meenglis@cts.com
- Print and Distribution Mgr. Arnold Trachtenberg
Arnold@nj.rr.com
- Website: Cathy Craig
CathyCraigEA@hotmail.com



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The Bulb Garden

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The Bulb Garden is the newsletter of the Pacific Bulb Society (PBS). It is published about the third week of each quarter (unless articles are not submitted) and is available to Pacific Bulb Society members. This newsletter provides gardening or bulb related articles, news of interest to members and announcements of the PBS organization.

Editor: Marguerite English

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Newsletter of the Pacific Bulb Society**

Pat Colville – Memberships
1555 Washburn Road
Pasadena, CA., 91105