

# THE JOURNAL

of the  
Alpine Garden Society of Victoria

Summer

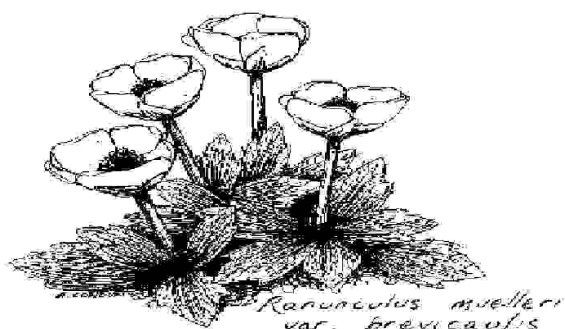
2018

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## **Welcome to the AGS of Victoria Journal**

### **Editor: Helen Batty**

Many thanks to the contributors for this edition. In putting this and every other Journal together I learn so much from other people's travels and expertise. This edition includes an article by Colin that focusses on the gorgeous blue plants that we all love and would love to grow well! Mat has written about his exciting adventure overseas this year which he also spoke about at one of our meetings. Jon provides us with tips on how best to make use of some of the fantastic online sites that are readily accessible and free - in particular 'Instagram' where many plant lovers post photos of plants to drool over when you are not out in the garden. Our final article by Viv is a wonderful reference tool for growers or would-be growers of cyclamen in Australian conditions. I find it occasionally frustrating that the best reference booklet I have for growing cyclamen is written for UK conditions. To have Viv's article to refer to will be very useful for a keen Australian cyclamen grower.

Photos supplied by contributors unless otherwise noted

### **Editorial Policy**

The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of either the Committee or the AGSVG membership.

Both AGS of Victoria members and non-members are encouraged to submit material for publication. However, the Committee and Editor, retain the right to edit or refuse the publication of any material submitted.

Articles can be submitted by post to: Helen Batty, 1a Sefton Court, Mount Waverley, Vic. 3149 or e-mail: [hrbatty@inet.net.au](mailto:hrbatty@inet.net.au)

**Don't forget to view the AGSVG blog that is managed by Viv Condon**

<http://agsvicgroup.blogspot.com.au>

**AGSVG Registration number: A0042023B**

# Feeing Blue

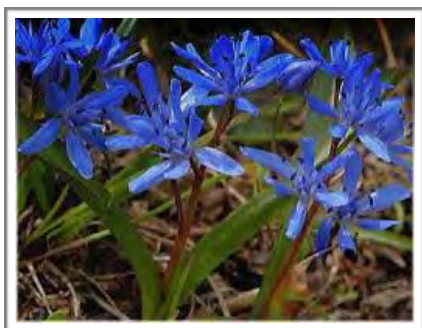
by Colin Blanch of Bowral

(in the Southern Highlands, NSW - elevation 690 metres)

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Don't we all love blue flowers? It's hard to imagine what our gardens would be like without them. Here are four of my favourite blue flowers that I grow in my cool climate garden in Bowral, New South Wales.

***Anemone blanda***, Is very hardy despite its origins in Greece and Southern Turkey. An herbaceous tuberous perennial, it grows to 15 cm (6 in) tall and broad. It has beautiful daisy-like flowers which appear in late winter and early spring, a time when little else is in flower. The flowers are an intense shade of purple blue but are also available in shades of pink and white. It grows in any well-drained soil which dries out in summer hence it is often used for underplanting deciduous trees which provide the necessary conditions. It rapidly colonises in any favoured location as in Otto's garden. The dark green foliage dies down in summer.



***Scilla bifolia*** Native to Europe and western Russia, south through Turkey to Syria. The flowers are violet to gentian-blue with compact upright leaves. A beautiful dwarf bulb, ideal for the rockery or under trees and shrubs where it will happily naturalise. Planted on mass it is a sight to behold as they provide an amazing show.

## ***Tecophilaea cyanocrocus***

The Chilean blue crocus is native to Chile, growing at 2,000 to 3,000 m elevation on dry, stony slopes in the Andes mountains South America. Although it had survived in cultivation due to its use as a greenhouse and landscape plant, it was believed to be extinct in the wild due to over-collecting, overgrazing, and general destruction of habitat, until it was



rediscovered in 2001. It grows best in a well-drained (pH 6-7) soil. The corms go dormant during summer and water should be entirely withheld once the foliage fades after the springtime period of active growth. However, *Tecophilaea* does not benefit from the summer baking that most tulips and many crocuses benefit from. *Tecophilaea* prefers dry but rather cool soil in

summer. Putting the pots in which it is grown in the shade, out of direct sun, is best. Water should be withheld until new growth appears in the autumn as the soil cools.

***Hyacinthoides non-scripta*** The true English Bluebell. Here are the differences in the two, the other being the Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) are often confused.

- On the Spanish flower, the bells are all round the stem, not just on one side which gives the English bluebell its drooping stature.
- The leaves are wider and bigger.
- The petals of each bell open wider and flare at the ends rather than curl.
- The bells are slimmer on the English bluebell.
- The stamen is blue on the Spanish version, and yellow on the English one.
- The English bluebell is a deeper blue than the Spanish one, which is a delicate shade of pale blue.
- The English bluebell is stronger scented.
- The Spanish bluebell is taller.
- The Spanish bluebell can tolerate sunshine and happily grows in open spaces, whereas the English bluebell prefers at least partial shade and is never found growing in open spaces.
- Spanish bluebell flowers lift their heads towards the sun. English bluebells never do.

I will never forget the sight in the Ancient woodlands at Great Dixter, a carpet of endless blue, well worth a visit in spring. It is now protected under the UK law.



# Turkish delights from the Taurus Mountains of Turkey

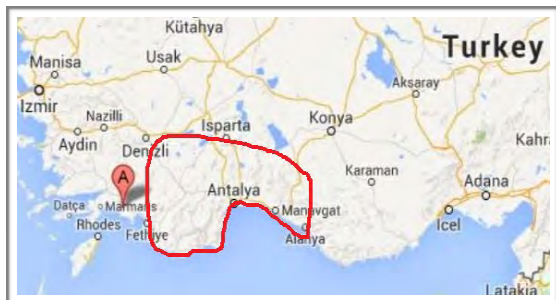
by Mat Murray

Senior Horticulturist Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens, Mount Tomah

Recently I had the great fortune to receive scholarships from the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock garden Club which allowed me to accompany a Botanical Expedition to look at the Bulbs of the western Taurus mountains in Turkey. Crocus. Which was of great interest to me, since they are my favourite plants.



*Crocus roseoviolaceus* (above) is a newly described species we saw on the very first day.

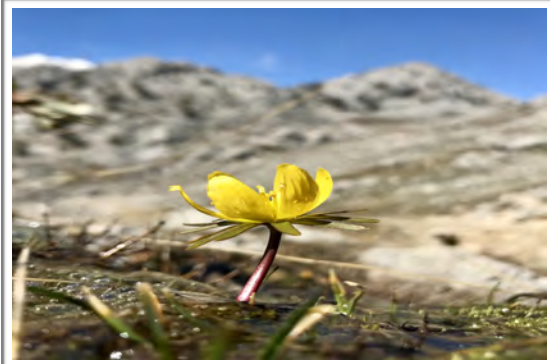


The area the expedition covered is inside the red zone on the map.

The Taurus mountains are a large mountain range that stretch from the south to the north of turkey along its Mediterranean coastline.



Many of the peaks are well over 200m with deep valleys between them. Each peak is separated by these valleys and this isolation has encouraged the development of many different species of plants within quite a small area. Hence there is great diversity in the Turkish flora. In the area I visited there has been the identification of 26 new species of *Crocus* alone!



I went in early spring. Peak flowering time for many bulbous plants. I was astonished at the conditions some grew in. There was

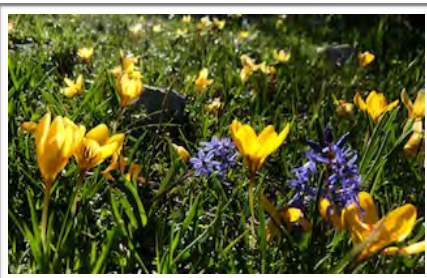
still snow and many of the plants were blooming in the running water of the melting snow. In Summer the area dries out and the bulbs go dormant for the summer. These are the conditions they need to grow. Ample moisture in growth and a drier dormancy.

*Eranthis hyemalis* (above) is an early snowmelt plant. At times it grows almost underwater.

In some places the bulbs were in countless numbers. Which was truly a wonderful sight!! Although we were at the end of the peak of *Galathus elwesii*, there were still many to be seen. It was wonderful to see so many of the Bulbs I grow in their natural location.

*Galanthus elwesii* (right) is a popular bulbous plant that grows by the millions in the mountains of Turkey. This plant was over collected in the past and its populations greatly diminished. It is protected now and the numbers are increasing again.





Yayla meadows (above right) were ablaze with bulbs. Acres of them. *Crocus gembossii* (a newly described species) and *Scilla bifolia* make a beautiful combination.

The high meadows are called Yayla. These are the summer grazing grounds for the flocks of goats. In winter they are covered in snow. In Spring as the snows melt this is the peak time for many spring flowering species to flower, set seed and grow before the goats return. The droppings of the goats have made the soil very fertile and the number of plants in these meadows is amazing. Everywhere I looked there were plants in flower. However, the pressures of over grazing are very evident. There are more goats in the meadows than ever before,

Some of the most beautiful plants grow in the toughest conditions. The soil can have toxic accumulations of minerals or the environment can be so rocky, cold and windswept little else will grow

The diminutive but delightful *Fritillaria serpenticoila* (above left) grows on serpentine soils where little else will grow

*Crocus baytopiorum* (right) is a plant I have longed to see since I first saw a picture of it. The icy blue flowers are of a colour unique amongst Crocus.

Some plants are in such a rush to make the most of the warmth of spring they begin to flower even before the snow has even melted. *Crocus antalyensis* was often seen doing this

It was the trip of a lifetime. Every day I saw beautiful plants and places. The Turkish people were friendly and hospitable. Many of the old buildings were gorgeous.





However, it was the mountains that I loved. With their rugged peaks, wide blue skies and filled with beautiful plants. I already want to return.





# Cyclamen in Australia

by Viv Condon

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The most exciting thing about growing Cyclamen, is that it depicts the seasons perfectly and it is possible to have Cyclamen flowering for every month of the year in Australia, forming drifts in the garden with some species.

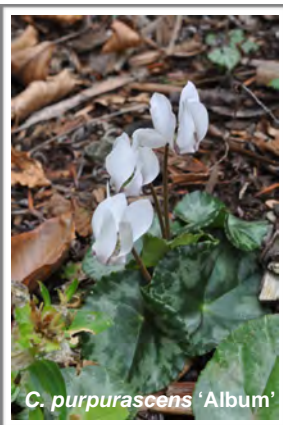
I remember when I first joined our Alpine Garden Society in Victoria I was taught at the very first meeting to collect my seed. That was the way to have drifts of Cyclamen and other plants. The Gordons (as they were affectionally known), our founding members, used to collect seed on Christmas day after plum pudding, or Boxing Day. I was given freshly collected Cyclamen seed in hand made origami seed packets made from white butchers paper, from the same founding members' gardens and told to sow immediately and keep the slugs away. I am still raising Cyclamen from seed and keeping the slugs away some 30 years later.

## *Cyclamen purpurascens*



Not an easy Cyclamen to grow in Australian conditions. You need to find the coolest position in your garden for it to grow well. I grow mine in a position shaded by our house for approximately half a day, dense shade, not filtered and then in the late afternoon filtered sun through a tricoloured beech tree. *C. purpurascens* has a smooth corm; the flowers are pink through to magenta

and are highly scented. My leaves can range from a plain dull green (*C. purpurascens fatrense*) to having silver markings. I have tried to grow *C.purpurascens* in terra cotta and plastic pots unsuccessfully; the corms rot from being either too hot or too much water and set no seed at all. It grows very successfully in the garden, setting small amounts of seed. It needs to be watered in the summer months so they are just moist, not wet. In the wild it grows in Italy around Lake Garda and in Slovenia in very large drifts covering whole hill sides, and in Switzerland's Monte San Giorgio



sides, and in Switzerland's Monte San Giorgio area in woodlands on dolomitic lime stone.

### ***Cyclamen repandum***

Comes into flower in early spring. It is planted in a woodland setting in my garden and they are seeding freely with seedlings coming up around the mother plants. The mid green leaves come to a point with a broad silver outline on top and a purplish red on the underside of the leaf. The flowers can be white, pink through to magenta purple. It loves Australian conditions coming from Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily with isolated populations in the Greek Peloponnese.

### ***Cyclamen repandum* subsp. *peloponnesiacum***

This subspecies has heart shaped leaves speckled with silver or pure silver with very little green showing. Another one for the woodland, near the edge of a small rock wall in my garden, so the corms are kept cool in summer, with good drainage all year.

### ***C. repandum* subsp. *repandum***

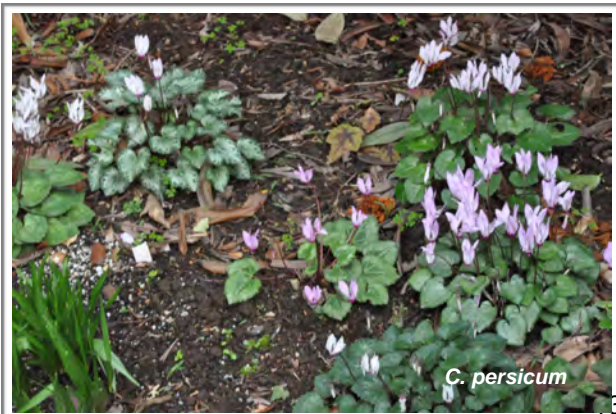
Separated from *C. repandum* by Christopher Grey-Wilson but argued by Jim Archibald that they were all the same.

### ***Cyclamen persicum***

A variable species in leaf and flower colour, and sweetly scented. From Greece, Rhodes, Southern Turkey, Cyprus, Algeria and Tunisia growing at sea level to 1200m.

The bulbs like it dry in summer with some shade and a well drained position. Summer rain is fine, but they do not need additional watering.

They grow in rough rocky situations in the wild and they grow very well in Australian gardens. It is too easy to discount plants that are easy to grow for us, but a group planting of *C. persicum* is just as beautiful as a drift of *Cyclamen hederifolium*.



## ***Cyclamen libanoticum***

I did not know where to plant my *C. libanoticum* and walked around the garden for months with pots in hands, not knowing where to plant it. I read all the books I could find. It's not like we can go out and buy more plants if they die; I would have to start again from seed. Lebanon; what would the climate be like there? It is always depicted as being hot and dry. I have finally planted it near the house, where it receives summer sun with some shade and sun for the rest of the year and water from the teapot in summer now and then. Large rocks keep their roots cool in the summer months and warm in the winter months. It is doing alright but I would not say it is flourishing. It has had about 10 flowers this year, so this is about the best



so far in four years. The first recorded plants of *C. libanoticum* have all been dug up and carted away from that original location, however it is not extinct in the wild. The Cyclamen Society went on an expedition to Lebanon to see if they could find any plants left growing in the wild. It was discovered on Mt Lebanon - up the Ibrahim River on very steep banks. The plant hunters had to crawl under

prickly bushes to see up close and make sure it was *C. libanoticum*.

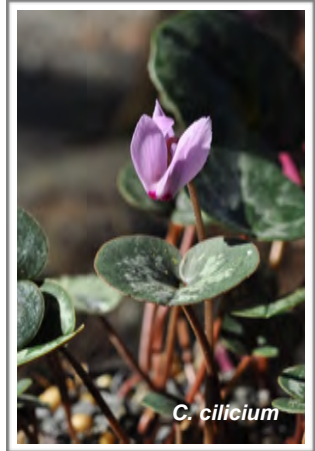
Smooth, soft brown corms and a light pattern on the leaves, it is a very distinctive cyclamen.



## **C y c l a m e n *pseudibericum***

Like *Cyclamen libanoticum* I do not have drifts of *C. pseudibericum*. I have collected a lot of my own seed last year, and that has germinated well, so in a few years I should have a lot more plants. The flowers are large on both *C. pseudibericum*

forma *roseum* soft-pink and *C. pseudibericum*. My *C. pseudibericum roseum* seed came from Archibald collection no. 367.015. 1997 and the flowers of *C. pseudibericum* are rich-magenta pink with white noses and a darker blotch above. The flowers hold their heads up well above the foliage; the leaves have slight markings on them but are a lovely shape and on the reverse are a purplish red. I have planted *C. pseudibericum* under a camellia with exposed roots that gets morning sun. It has taken quite a while to settle in, but as the leaf litter decomposes around the tubers this year they have been lovely. From Turkey-Amanus and Anti Taurus growing in coniferous and woodland conditions. No additional watering is required, just rainfall.



### ***Cyclamen cilicium***

This species is a joy to grow in the glasshouse in pans and in the garden. It sets seed readily and needs to be watered occasionally in hot weather when grown in the garden. It is an elegant little species, being easy to grow and flowers prolifically. The flowers appear in autumn and are faintly scented. From Turkey and South Anitolia growing in woodlands of pine and fir trees in scree at 700 to 2,000 meters. It overlaps in the wild with *Cyclamen pseudibericum*, flowering at different times.

### ***Cyclamen coum***

This species is an absolute joy to see in the middle of winter in large drifts in the coldest of months, brightening up the grey days on the way to the gate to get the mail from the letterbox. Planted under a *Luma apiculata*, with rusty coloured trunk and clustered small white fluffy flowers. It is not a tall tree (approx 2 metres) but provides enough shade for *C. coum* in summer. With a smallish-smooth corm, this is another cyclamen setting plenty of seed. Flowers are white to pale pink, magenta, and white with deep purple blotch at the base of each





*C. coum forma albissimum*

lobe. Leaf markings all vary from Christmas tree markings to plain dull green, kidney shape with silver markings and pure silver leaves. I grow two special *C. coum*, one being from our founding members who I mentioned earlier, which came from Cyclamen

Society collected seed from a Turkey

expedition, CSE 87055T, 1987 selected from a population between Ordu and Ulubey, Northern Turkey. The other is *C. coum forma albissimum* from Jim and Jenny Archibald seed collection. It has dull green leaves and pure white flowers.

From North-eastern Turkey and southern USSR and Northern Iran *C. coum* enjoys a sprinkling from the hose in summer months.

### ***Cyclamen coum subsp. caucasicum***

The leaves are very round and slightly undulated on the edges, distribution North-eastern Turkey and southern Caucasus.

### ***Cyclamen elegans***



*C. elegans*  
Archibald seed

All of my *C. elegans* plants came from Archibald seed, where there were two seed collections in the Mountains of Northern Iran in 2001, taking 5 years to flower. This Cyclamen needs some shade and moisture in

summer, the same conditions as *Cyclamen coum*. It has been separated from *Cyclamen coum* and has been classified as a species in its own right. Scented flowers, flowering in the winter. The flowers are larger than *C. coum* and the petals are pointed as are the leaves, not round as in *C. coum*. It is still rare in cultivation and not listed for sale in many places around the world.

### ***Cyclamen alpinum***

Another cyclamen that has been reclassified into its own group. It was previously called *Cyclamen trochopteranthum*. Flowers are honey scented, and the petal lobes twist through 90 degrees, almost horizontally to resemble propellers. Flowering late winter to early spring. I have not grown this cyclamen in the garden yet and it did not set seed last year. I only plant my Cyclamen in the garden when I have more than three plants or corms growing in the glass house. Found growing in southwestern Anatolia, Turkey growing in coniferous woodland in scrub among tree roots. Water through summer months.

### ***Cyclamen parviflorum***

The smallest Cyclamen of all, just like a smaller version of *Cyclamen coum*, but trickier to grow and not robust in my garden at all. The Gordons grew it beautifully beside the castle in not much sun, but I find they get covered in leaves and do not do well for me. They are much better in the glasshouse where I can monitor the watering. The corm always needs to be covered by gravel when growing in pots to prevent corms over heating and to keep them cool. The gravel can be shaken off to see how the bulbs are going. *C. parviflorum* hates to be over potted; the more congested in the pot, the happier it is. It comes from the regions of northern Iran and Turkey where *Cyclamen coum* and *Cyclamen parviflorum* can be found in close proximity.

### ***Cyclamen rohlfsianum***

Another tricky cyclamen to grow. The most difficult thing is to find the exact spot to grow it,. Lydia grew this cyclamen to perfection. She had a huge bulb covered in flowers and seed that had set. It actually broke the terracotta pot that it was growing in one year. While it was dormant over summer she stored it under a table which provided shade and received no rain at all. It was not watered until late February, when she would remember it, drag it out and start the watering or if it was showing a bit of leaf. Lydia suggested to Helen to soak the pot in a bucket of water and then place the pot in a sunny position. From Libya-Cyrenaica it grows in rocky places from sea level to 450m.

I am growing my *C. rohlfsianum* under the eaves of the house and I start watering in late February.



### ***Cyclamen mirabile***

Very similar to *Cyclamen cilicium* but the leaves have distinct points and are often marbled and have varying shades of pink to them, some being quite pink.

Two beautiful forms I grow that have very pink foliage are *C. mirabile* Tilebarn Nicholas and *C. mirabile* Tilebarn Anne. *C. mirabile* is endemic to south-western Turkey, in pine forests and in rocky places 400-1,600m. Mine rarely set seed, even with hand pollination with a tiny paintbrush. *Cyclamen mirabile* needs shade protection in summer months, it grows quite well in the shaded parts of the garden and glass house, receiving water in summer months.

### ***Cyclamen intaminatum***

A very dainty species, with the flowers being white through to a pale pink with very fine pointed petals. The rounded leaves can be plain green or marbled. It is an easy species. From Western Turkey, usually found in deciduous woodland at 1,000-1,100m. This is another cyclamen needing shade protection in our summer months. It looks lovely when planted in a raised bed, where you can see the flowers at eye level.



### ***Cyclamen creticum***

Very similar in size to *C. balearicum*, this cyclamen has pale pink and white flowers and is also appreciated better at eye level. I am still growing this species in the glass-house. The corms are not large enough to be planted out as yet and are very slow to develop. It originates from Crete and Karpathos, growing beneath trees and in scrub land at sea level. Very rarely seen in Australia.

### ***Cyclamen cyprium***

The flowers of this cyclamen appear often at the same time as the leaves. It has a sweet fragrance and the flowers can be white through to pale pink, with a distinct magenta 'M' blotch at the base of the flowers. From western and northern Cypress growing in shady rocky places, beneath trees and sometimes in scree at sea level to 1,200m. I have never had enough bulbs to plant out in the garden, but last year good seed was set, but has not germinated as yet.

The watering of this species is paramount: You cannot dry it out in summer, but over



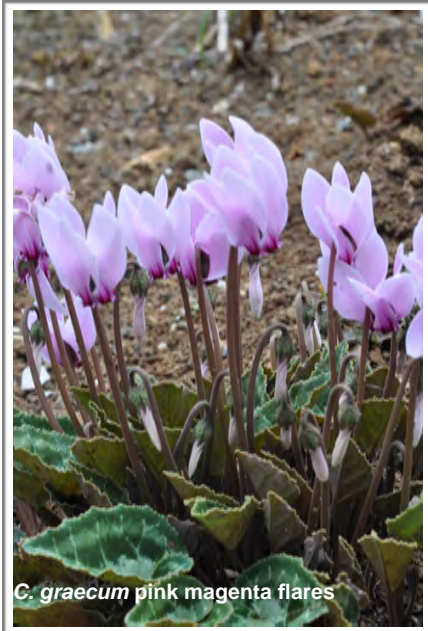




watering will rot the corm. Better to keep the corm on the dryish side rather than too wet.

### ***Cyclamen africanum***

This is another cyclamen for drifts. I have it under high shade of the NSW Waratah Tree. We do not seem to have any variation in the leaf shape and markings, even from different sources of seed for *C. africanum*. They all look very similar in shape and leaf markings. It is very easy to tell the difference between *C. hederifolium* and *C. africanum*. The flowers and leaves come straight up out of the centre of the tuber in *C. africanum*, whereas *Cyclamen hederifolium* flowers and leaves lie on the ground and then rise. I have never grown a white flowering form of *C. africanum*, but our son Aaron has it growing and seeding in his garden and they are quite rare.



### ***Cyclamen graecum***

Another cyclamen that I grow in a drift, but not under any shady tree; full sun and well drained soil for this corm. It is more like a rough corky beetroot. If there was one cyclamen I would not like to be without it is *C. graecum*, the leaves are exquisitely marked, with some being totally silvery-grey. These are Cyclamen Society seed called Glyfada dated 2002 collection from the Glyfada area, Greece. Other leaves are a velvety green with silver markings. The flowers vary from pure white with no pink flares from the nose, while other white flowers have deep pink

flares, magenta and pink with deeper pink flares, so much variety, like their leaves, absolutely stunning. Summer to Autumn flowering in a well drained position, with summer rain not bothering the corms, as it quickly dries up.

### ***Cyclamen balearicum***

A small white or pale pink flowering species, not taking up a great deal of garden space. Needing a semi-shaded position and planted near eye level where it is best appreciated. Silver markings on the leaves.

*C. balearicum* was thought to be solely from the Balearic Islands, but has recently been found in southern France.



### ***Cyclamen hederifolium***

The most readily available cyclamen here in Australia; not sold by many nurseries but is reasonably available from Victorian Nurseries. Flowering in late summer to autumn, (February, March and April), it sets copious amounts of seed. The corms get to the size of dinner plates and they are long lived, forming large drifts of deep rose, pink and white flowers in the shade of large trees. The leaves are all different, some are marbled, ivy shaped, others are marbled and long (arrow head). My soil is a deep reddish soil that gets plenty of leaf litter in autumn, which in turn feeds the corms, but Australia has very old soil, lacking in potash and nutrients; we need to feed the whole garden each year. It is widely spread throughout Europe.

### ***Cyclamen confusum***

My seed came from Lydia and is true to type. She was worried it may be a hybrid but when she saw the waxy, thick leaf, she knew it was correct. The flowers are also thick and substantial. When growing this species in a pot it needs good drainage as it does not like winter wet. It can be grown outside but in a well-drained pot. I haven't grown this species in the garden as yet. *C. confusum* was always considered as *Cyclamen hederifolium* and has now been placed as a separate species by Christopher Grey-Wilson.



This perfumed Cretan Cyclamen is well worth the trouble of trying to get seed. It is quite scarce in cultivation. Found growing in mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland on Crete but boundaries have not been defined yet.

### ***Cyclamen colchicum***

This is another species I grow in the glass-house near the door where it receives plenty of fresh air. The deep pink flowers are highly perfumed. Not all the thick leaves have silver markings, some are a dull green with toothed margins. My bulbs grow in a plastic pot in a good potting mix with grit and leaf mulch mixed through. It has set no seed at all, even after hand pollination. My seed came from Green Ice seed company.

One needs to be very wary of elephant beetle larvae as they can destroy corms in weeks. Strongly fragrant flowers, a beautiful Cyclamen in all respects, but very slow in growth from seed - it can take 4 or 5 years to have any size to the corm to flower and even slower for seed to germinate.

The known locations of this species are near the village of Okumi in Abkhazia in the western Caucasus.



### **Cultivation**

When growing Cyclamen from seed I always add leaf mulch to my potting mix as it aids in seed germination; add coarse sand for drainage. I divide potting mix into thirds - 1 bucket of good potting mix, 1 bucket of leaf mulch and 1 bucket of coarse gravel. Mix all together and it is ready for Cyclamen seed. Cover seed with fine gravel as this will moderate temperatures and stop seed washing away or to one side of the pot.

Once Cyclamen seeds germinate, leave in the pot several years feeding regularly with a granular feed to develop corms. If you replot them too early the corms will rot. They love being crowded together in the pot; it keeps them dry. Gently squeeze pot to see how crowded it is and how much the corms have grown. If it feels full then it's time to pot on but be careful not to

put into too large a pot otherwise water will hang around your corm and they will rot. Better to under pot than over pot and maintain granular feeding.



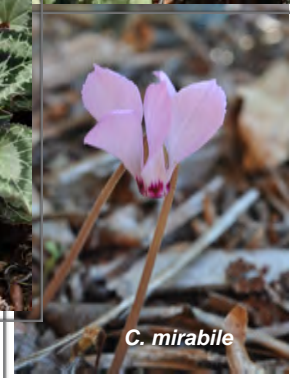
*C. graecum* Glyfada



*C. africanum album* (Aaron's)



*C. graecum*



*C. mirabile*



*C. graecum*

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