

## **CLIVIAS, THE FIRST 12 MONTHS: FROM SEED TO SEEDLING**

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Clivias are basically hardy, tolerant plants, and will cope with remarkably diverse conditions. There is no single, absolute, or perfect path that I or anyone can say you must follow to get results. We are all constantly learning, and it is through innovation, experimentation, sharing our knowledge and experiences, and above all through careful reflection on practices and outcomes that we gain new insights, increase our understanding, and hopefully achieve great results with our Clivias.

In the course of the following paragraphs I will outline the approach I have taken in that crucial first 12 months, when we take each Clivia from little more than potential - a seed - through to a robust seedling with several leaves and well on the path to realising that potential. Over the past five years I have germinated about 700-800 seeds each year, with an overall germination rate consistently around 95%. On average I would, in all honesty, lose less than 10 seedlings each year – touch wood!

There are several inter-related goals when it comes to propagating Clivias, and these underscores the importance of your management practices. These goals include: Maximizing your germination rate, achieving at the same time relatively quick germination;

- i. Achieving a good, consistent growth rate post-germination;
- ii. Minimizing losses through insect attack, rot and fungal disease; and ultimately,
- iii. Growing strong seedlings, with good leaf colour (and lustre), and healthy root systems.

### **Preparation**

As with so many areas of endeavour, sound preparation and consistent effort bears fruit. You need to think carefully about your seed germination arrangements, with different methods having their strengths and limitations. By all means experiment as you work out what suits you and do take into account the time you can commit to this stage as some propagation methods will be more demanding of your time than others. Shelter, yet good ventilation and sunlight are essential ingredients. As always, the mix you use must be well aerated and well drained, and you must manage carefully the amount of water your seeds are getting. Finally, the need for sound hygiene cannot be over-emphasised. This last aspect often fails to get the attention it deserves, yet it is a crucial element.

### **Propagating box**

I have built my own propagating boxes (Fig. 8). Essentially, it's a simple box arrangement built around a heated, thermostatically-controlled propagating tray (Garden Express at Monbulk sell single, double and four tray models). The propagating box has a simple hinged lid, with a clear corrugated polycarbonate sheeting (Laser lite) cover — the corrugations allowing a good amount of air circulation, but the overall effect of the lidded box arrangement is still to retain a good deal of warmth and humidity (the temperature remains set at 23°-25°C).