**Clivia gardenii** Hook.

**Family:** Amaryllidaceae

Common names: Major Garden’s Clivia, Natal drooping Clivia (English); boslelie (Afrikaans); umayime (Zulu)

**Introduction**

*Clivia gardenii* is a subtle and delicately pretty sister to the well-known *Clivia miniata* (Bush Lily), which has been in cultivation for many years.

![Clivia gardenii](image)

**Description**

Like all *Clivia*, *C. gardenii* grows in the shade of forests and is a clump-forming perennial plant which, although slow growing, can attain a great age. The clumps reach up to 60 cm in height. Flowering occurs in autumn, from April until June. Bright red fleshy berries follow the flowers and are eaten by birds.

Where *Clivia miniata* has a head of trumpet-shaped flowers, *Clivia gardenii* has slender, tubular flowers which hang downwards in the inflorescence. The flowers are orange in colour, the petals tipped with green. There are two other species of *Clivia* which have similar pendulous flowers, *C. nobilis* (Eastern Cape Clivia) and *C. caulescens* (growing predominately in Mpumalanga and Northern Province).
**Distribution description**

There are four species of *Clivia* in total and all occur naturally only in South Africa, although they are cultivated widely throughout the world.

**History**

*Clivia* is named after the Duchess of Northumberland, Lady Charlotte Clive, who first cultivated and flowered the type specimen in England. The specific name *gardenii* is after Major Robert Garden, who was stationed in KwaZulu Natal as a soldier between 1848 - 1853.

**Ecology**

*Clivia* are the subject of many breeding programs which produce spectacular colours and forms.

**Use**

Some *Clivia* species are used traditionally for the treatment of childbirth complications and also snakebite. However, there are findings that the chemical constituents in *Clivia* rhizomes (the parts used) are dangerous and should be avoided for medicinal purposes.

Sadly, its popularity as a medicinal plant and the fact that the rhizome is removed for use has led to the demise of natural *Clivia* populations in many areas.

**Growing Clivia gardenii**

Originating mostly from KwaZulu-Natal, *C. gardenii* makes a beautiful addition to the shady garden. It is apparently able to tolerate fairly dry conditions, as the roots are fleshy and have water storage capabilities. This makes it a wonderful waterwise garden plant. It is also an excellent pot specimen that requires a well-drained humus-rich potting medium.

If planted in very deep shade, flowering may be adversely affected. *Clivia* also do not thrive in sunny conditions, becoming yellow and stunted. They should be planted in a shady position with plenty of compost and bone-meal added to the soil.

Propagation may be through division or by seed. Clumps can be split up in late winter and replanted or bagged. Seed should be cleaned as soon as it is harvested. The fleshy pulp is peeled off revealing the large, pearly seed within. The seeds should be sown immediately in a deep seed-tray with seedling mix. The large seeds can be pressed gently into the seedling mix until they are flush with the surface and then covered lightly with sieved mix. If the seedling mix is too tightly packed in the tray, the young root will not be able to penetrate it and will lift the seedling right out of the soil. The medium should not be allowed to dry out and since germination is relatively slow, the seed trays should be monitored for signs of algal or fungal growth on the surface.
PLEASE NOTE that Clivia belong to the family Amaryllidaceae of which many species are poisonous, and it is advisable to wash your hands after handling the plants.

Alice Aubrey
Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden
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**Plant Attributes:**

- **Plant Type:** Perennial
- **SA Distribution:** Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal
- **Soil type:** Loam
- **Flowering season:** Late Summer, Winter
- **PH:** Neutral
- **Flower colour:** Orange
- **Aspect:** Shade
- **Gardening skill:** Average

**Special Features:**

- Attracts birds
- Good pot plant
- Poisonous
- Medical plant