

CULTURAL HINTS FOR MARCH-APRIL

(with Brian Steven)

Following the good summer rains!!! in south-east Queensland and other Clivia growing areas of Eastern Australia, hopefully members have managed to keep fungal problems in check. From reports in the Downs area, most growers have had some fungal problems, with small seedlings "falling over." The following brief guide should help Clivia enthusiasts during the months of March and April.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Although the weather is now cooler with autumn here, there are still the nuisance pests and diseases around our Clivias, and of course later in the year after winter they could appear again. The following are the main pests and diseases that growers should keep under control.

PESTS – MEALYBUG: The main worry for Clivia growers. There are reports from members that they have had large infestations of mealy-bug.

They are usually found on the newer growths. If not controlled they can really make a mess of the plant. Light infestations can be controlled by wiping a cotton bud, dipped in metho or a surgical spirit on to the insects. Sprays and dusts can be used for larger outbreaks. Confidor is a very successful insecticide. For those who like to use the natural sprays of course Pyrethrum is the insecticide.

Remember when handling insecticides and fungicides take precautions and please wear protective gloves and mask.

SNAILS AND SLUGS: Following the record summer rains, the snails and slugs have been appearing in numbers. These should be kept under control always. It is marvelous what a slug or snail can do to a new growth or lovely Clivia flower if they get the

chance. Check plants and pots regularly, especially during damp weather. Keep them in check with one of the snail baits spread around.

LILY BORER: These are black caterpillars with a yellow band and can cause major damage to Clivia plants. This caterpillar tunnels into the leaves and stem and if left to its own devices will kill the plant.

There have also been reports of different types of caterpillars chewing the Clivia leaves. Kill them by squashing by hand or use a systemic stomach pesticide.

Other less prevalent pests are aphids, thrips, and red spider mite. Check with your nurseryman on methods to rid your collection of these.

FUNGAL AND BACTERIAL DISEASES: Following the record rains in most of eastern Australia Clivias will be a good candidate for fungal and bacterial diseases. Even though the weather is cooler now, various diseases can still appear in Clivias such as seed rot, root rot, rust, leaf spot and bacterial rot. We all have had the experience of a young seedling or a semi-mature Clivia plant in our collections "falling over." This problem is usually caused by too wet a potting mix or not enough aeration in the mix. Make sure you have an open mix and watch the watering.

Often larger plants can be saved by cutting off the rotting material and dusting with Flowers of Sulphur to dry out the infected plant. If the roots are unaffected by the rot, often the plant will throw new growths. Even the top part of the plant can be planted out after cleaning off the rotted parts. Hopefully it will develop new roots.

There are various fungicides like copper sprays, Fongarid and Zineb. Use as directed.

WATERING

Watering should be kept to a minimum now (March and April) on large plants, but don't let young seedlings in small pots dry out.

FEEDING

Fertiliser can still be applied to young seedlings. Be very careful with the seedlings and only use fertilisers like blood and bone, Nitrosol, seaweed fertilisers or half strength Thrive. The fertilising of the larger plants can now be eased off. Some enthusiasts give their mature plants a good dose of trace elements and potassium at this time to help the flowering and add vigor to the plants.

PLANTING OUT SEEDLINGS

These are probably the last months planting out young seedlings should be undertaken. Young plants should be planted out when the first leaf is at least 10cm and preferably when a second leaf is on the way. Plant them out in individual small pots or community pots (several plants in the one pot).

The potting mix should be similar to the potted adult plants growing medium. Make sure the seedlings are kept under shade of at least 80% and do not over-water. Use fertiliser as above. **DO NOT OVERPOT.**

POTTING ON

If you have seedlings at least 2 months old and are growing well and look healthy, pot them on to bigger pots. Small chopped up pieces of styrene or beads can be placed in the bottom of the pots to lighten the load and help drainage. Remember not to disturb the roots of the plants too much.

DIVIDING AND TRANSPLANTING

The general opinion is that Clivias in warm climates can be divided and repotted any time of the year without detrimental results. Please don't divide any large plants that you may be exhibiting in September or you may ruin the flowering. Remember if offsets are being removed, handle the plant gently, pulling the roots apart. Don't forget to dust any cut with Flowers of Sulphur to prevent any rotting.

DEAD AND YELOWING LEAVES

There are usually many yellowing and dead leaves around your Clivias now. Keep your Clivia growing areas free of these leaves. These leaves can spread fungal diseases.

