

Cultural notes for the Autumn/Winter period

with Brian Steven

The following brief guide should help clivia enthusiasts during the months of May, June and July.

HARVESTING SEED :

Seed from the 2017 main clivia flowering season (August through to October) will be starting to really ripen up now, right through to July, August and September. The berries can be picked when they begin to colour up and soften slightly. Many growers will pick them when they colour (red or yellow), but they can be picked green. I like to pick them when they have at least 9 months ripening, but of course sometimes the berries are knocked off or fall off. Plant them out, you may still get good results. Remove the skin, pulp and fine membrane around the seeds. Dust slightly with a suitable contact fungicide.

PLANTING SEED:

Seed can be planted out straight after harvesting, but it is best to soak them in water with a drop of detergent added overnight and then dry them out before planting. Some like to wait for a week or so after removing seeds from the berry. Others like to keep the seeds stored until the warmer weather. If doing this, store the seeds in a dry cool place. Keep them in a warm spot to stimulate germination. When the seeds germinate transfer them to a polystyrene box or pots containing a fine potting or seed raising mix. Remember to plant the seed with the radicle (root) facing down. Do not bury the seed. Keep moist and in a warm shady position. Make sure you do not over-water and that your container has drain holes.

PESTS – MEALY BUG:

The main worry for clivia growers. These bugs are very small 3mm long, creamy white bodied, insects covered by threads protruding. They are 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.

You can use a much cheaper method, using Yates tomato dust (active constituents sulphur, copper oxychloride and Spinosad.) The sulphur and copper are protectant fungicides. Sulphur is also a miticide and Spinosad is an insecticide derived from natural soil bacteria. For those who like to use the natural sprays of course Pyrethum is the insecticide.

SNAILS AND SLUGS:

These should be kept under control at all times especially during damp weather. It is marvellous what a slug or snail can do to a 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 snailbaits spread around.

LILY BORER:

These pests probably will not be present during the cooler weather. These are black caterpillars with yellow bands 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. Kill them by squashing by hand or use a systemic stomach pesticide.

FUNGAL AND BACTERIAL DISEASES:

Various diseases occur 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 in the pot mix. Make sure you have an open mix and watch the watering, especially now the colder weather is with us. Often larger plants can be saved by cutting off the rotting material and dusting with Flowers of Sulphur and dry out the infected part. If the roots are unaffected by the rot often the plant will throw new growths. Even the top part can be planted out after cleaning off the rotted material. Hopefully it will develop new roots.

WATERING:

As the temperatures drop this time of the year, watering should be kept to a minimum, but don't let small seedlings in small pots dry out. I have always found that watering young seedlings once a week all year round is the way to go (provided no rain has fallen). I do not like any clivias big or small to dry out.

FEEDING:

In the next couple of months fertilising of larger plants is not recommended as the growing season is coming to a halt. To help promote flowering, potassium should be applied. The clivias that are not big enough to flower, use the “lazy man's” fertiliser Osmocote, or similar. Of course young seedlings should be kept moving with light

PLANTING OUT SEEDLINGS:

Planting out young seedlings can still be undertaken now, 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 70% and do not overwater. Use fertiliser as above. **DO NOT OVERPOT.**

POTTING ON:

If you have seedlings at least 12 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, but spring and summer are regarded as the best times as they should establish more quickly. 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:

Keep your clivia growing areas free of any dead or yellowing lower leaves.