

# HINTS FOR GROWING CLIVIAS SUCCESSFULLY

The following hints should enable clivia enthusiasts to grow the plants successfully.

## CULTIVATION

Clivias are among the most easily cultivated garden plants. Their attractive evergreen leaves, brilliant flowerheads and eye-catching ripe berries, as well as their drought-tolerance and ability to grow under low light conditions have endeared them to gardeners all over the world. Depending on climate conditions, they make ideal garden or container plants, and *Clivia miniata* is also used as a cut flower.

## LOCATION AND CLIMATE

Dappled shade is the most suitable location for growing outdoors. They will also thrive in heavy shade, but may not flower or flower erratically. Morning sun is the most beneficial. They are also excellent subjects for large containers on a shady patio. Excessive exposure to the sun results in severe scorching of the leaves. The ideal shade for greenhouse grown clivias is 70-80% shadecloth.

## USES IN THE GARDEN

While all six clivia species are suitable for outdoor cultivation in mild climates, it is the large-flowered clivia *miniata* that is the most suitable and eye-catching species for mass garden cultivation. It is seen to best advantage planted in large drifts under evergreens. The four pendulous-flowered species are more suited to pockets in a shady rockery.

Once planted, clivias like to remain in the same position for many years, and best flowering results are always obtained from well-established clumps. They resent root disturbance and can be left in the same position for up to 10 years or more before dividing. Plants can become too thick, resulting in diminished flowering.

## CONTAINER SUBJECTS

Clivias, particularly the common *miniata* make outstanding container subjects. They enjoy having their roots slightly restricted, and provided they are well fertilised, flower extremely well in large pots. In addition their attractive evergreen leaves and brightly coloured ripe berries provide interest throughout the year. Good drainage is essential as the roots will soon rot under soggy, poorly aerated conditions. Make sure there are good drainage holes in the bottom of the container.

## GROWING MEDIUM

Clivias can be grown successfully in a wide variety of media, as long as the three most important requirements -- good drainage, good soil aeration and high humus content -- are provided. Every clivia grower will discover his/her own preferred medium, and no hard and fast rules can be laid down in this regard. Some suggestions are a mixture of equal parts well decomposed compost, coarse sand and good garden loam. Another popular mix is a mixture of finely chopped pine bark mixed with about 10% coarse sand. This mix is more open and allows very good aeration of the plant and prevents water-logging but does not hold the moisture as well as the previous one. In the garden, well-dug compost and leaf-mould with good garden loam are ideal for clivias.

## WATERING

Clivias, once established are remarkably drought resistant in all but the driest conditions, provided they have sufficient shade and plenty of organic matter within the growing medium. Ideally they should receive regular watering during their active growing period during the summer months and less in winter. They easily survive drought conditions, but being so versatile, can also withstand heavy rainfall pro-

vided the soil is well drained. A suggested watering program for both containerised and garden clivias is one good watering per week during summer and once every two to three weeks in winter.

## FEEDING

Clivias are gross feeders and quality and quantity of flowers, leaves and fruit can be greatly enhanced by regular feeding via both the foliage and roots. Good seaweed or blood and bone type fertilisers are beneficial to young seedlings. For mature plants a good balanced granular fertiliser like Tropic or similar or a slow-release fertiliser like Osmocote (for the lazy grower) are beneficial.

## HARDINESS

All five clivia species are frost tender, and in very cold climates are best grown in tubs or pots in the glasshouse or inside the home. Clivias can be grown in low light conditions, but unlikely to produce flowers, yet the foliage remains pleasing.

## TYPES

There are many different types of clivia that can be purchased from garden stores, clivia nurseries and club shows. Some of them are clivia *miniata* in shades of pastel, dark oranges, reds, creams, yellows, green centred oranges and yellows, multi-petals, splash colours, and variegated, broad leaf Japanese and Chinese hybrids.

Of course the other five clivia species *gardenii*, *caulescens*, *nobilis*, *mirabilis* and *robusta* are available in very different forms and the inter-breeding of these with *miniata* resulting in spectacular coloured interspecifics.

## PESTS AND DISEASES

The following are the main pests and diseases that growers have to look out for, especially in the warmer months.

**MEALY BUG:** The main worry for clivia growers. These are very small, creamy white bodied insects. They are usually found in the newer growths. Light infestations can be controlled by using a cotton bud dipped in metho on to the insects. Sprays and dusts can be used for larger outbreaks. Confidor is a very successful insecticide. Follow the directions on the label. For the users of natural sprays Pyrethum is used.

**SNAILS AND SLUGS:** Keep these under control at all times with the appropriate baits.

**FUNGAL AND BACTERIAL DISEASES:** Although clivias are relatively fungal and disease free, various diseases occasionally occur in clivias such as seed rot, root rot, rust, leaf spot and bacterial rot. There are several suitable fungicides available like Fongarid and Zineb. Use as directed.

## **Toowoomba Clivia Society Inc.**

**The Toowoomba Clivia Society Inc. is a relatively new garden club specialising in the growing and hybridising of clivia.**

**The friendly club meets bi-monthly at members homes and usually has a guest speaker and interesting topics pertaining to clivias.**

**Toowoomba Clivia Society Inc. is only one of two clivia clubs in Australia and always welcomes new members.**

**If you are interested in joining the club phone Secretary, Brian Mahoney on 07 46364371 or email him at [bdmahoney@bigpond.com](mailto:bdmahoney@bigpond.com) for a membership form.**