

perennial solutions



By Paul Pilon

Cyclamen 'Something Magic'

They aren't just for the holidays anymore: Cyclamen are winter hardy and a great addition to many perennial gardens.

Cyclamen are primarily known for their use as potted plants, marketed around many of the major winter holidays. But many consumers are surprised to learn that some cyclamen species are winter hardy and can be effectively used in perennial landscapes. Recently, Terra Nova Nurseries introduced the industry's first cyclamen cultivar from tissue culture, appropriately named 'Something Magic'.

'Something Magic' delivers more than cheerful illusions as it brightens up usually-drab shade gardens in the early spring. The bold variegated rounded leaves have dark-green Christmas-tree shaped centers completely surrounded by silver, with delineated green borders. The eye-catching foliage appears in the late winter in warmer climates and in early spring in colder parts of the country. Individual rose-pink flowers rise above these dainty plants in the spring like shooting stars.

'Something Magic' has a slightly smaller plant canopy than many of the potted cultivars with foliage reaching only 3 inches tall; when blooming, the plant height reaches approximately 6 inches. In the landscape, the clumps gradually expand each year reaching 10 inches wide at maturity. They prefer to be grown in well-drained soils in locations with partial to full shade throughout USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 9. Growers and gardeners should note that cyclamen are cool-season perennials and often go dormant during the heat of the summer; growth resumes in the fall.

Cyclamen are commonly used to liven up shade gardens or woodlands. They are well suited to these locations as they are resistant to deer and rabbit feeding. With their compact size and texture of the foliage, 'Something Magic' is often utilized as an accent plant, in the edges of borders, in rock gardens or in mass plantings. Additionally, they work well when grown in small containers, mixed combos or window boxes.

With its popularity as an indoor flowering potted plant, cyclamen should do well in the perennial marketplace once gardeners learn about winter-hardy cultivars such as 'Something Magic'. This is a

wonderful new cultivar for commercial growers to add to their premium perennial programs.

Propagation

Cyclamen 'Something Magic' is a patented variety and currently is only propagated by means of tissue culture; self-propagation is currently prohibited.

Production

Because of its compact plant habit, 'Something Magic' is best suited for production in small container sizes — usually 2 quarts or smaller. When transplanting liners, plant them even with the soil line of the plug they were previously produced in. It performs best in a media with both good water holding characteristics and, more importantly, adequate aeration. To reduce the likelihood of crown rot and enhance initial rooting, apply a fungicide drench after planting using thiophanate methyl (Cleary's 3336) or azoxystrobin (Heritage); use each product's labeled rates for drench applications. To promote good root development, keep them fairly dry and allow the growing mix to dry slightly between irrigations.

Maintain the media pH between 5.5 and 6.3 throughout the production cycle. They are light feeders requiring nitrate levels of 75-125 ppm under a constant liquid fertilizer programs, or 200 ppm as needed. For optimum growth and plant quality, avoid using ammonium-based fertilizers; water-soluble fertilizers derived from calcium and potassium sources are preferred. Because of their the low fertility requirement and sensitivity to high salts, controlled-release fertilizers are not recommended. Once established, cyclamen require a slightly below-average amount of irrigation



Photos: Terra Nova Nurseries

and prefer to be kept evenly moist but not wet. When irrigation is necessary, water them thoroughly and then allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Avoid overly wet conditions to avoid root rot.

During production, avoid tem-

perature extremes; optimal development occurs with temperatures at 58-63° F. Temperatures above 80° F causes poor flower initiation, and temperatures below 55° F may create root rot problems, particularly in conjunction with low light

levels. Cyclamen should be produced under shade during mid-spring and summer to prevent leaf scald, reduce flower delay and keep them actively growing. Provide 3,000 to 4,400 foot-candles of light; when the light levels are nat-

urally above these levels, it is beneficial to shade cyclamen crops. Given its compact habit, it is not necessary to control plant height during production.

Insects and Diseases

Aphids, fungus gnats, shore flies, thrips and cyclamen mites may occasionally be found feeding on cyclamen. Fungus gnats and shore flies are primarily vectors for diseases — Erwinia (fungus gnats) and Fusarium (shore flies). Most of these insects can be detected with routine crop monitoring. Because cyclamen mites can be harder to detect until they have already significantly injured crops, many growers implement preventive programs rotating between effective miticides.

The primary diseases of cyclamen are Botrytis, Fusarium wilt, Erwinia soft rot and Thielaviopsis. Many of the diseases can be avoided with good moisture management and by ensuring the foliage is dry before night. Because of the frequency of Fusarium infections, many growers apply preventive drenches using azoxystrobin (Heritage), fludioxonil (Medallion) and triflumizole (Terraguard).

Forcing


Cyclamen ‘Something Magic’ is most commonly produced for early-spring sales and marketed alongside other early-blooming perennials, such as helleborus



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and primula. They do not require cold for flowering but require several months for bulking. Currently, the best strategy entails acquiring large liners that have been bulked up and planting them into the final container 12 to 16 weeks before the desired flowering date.

Similar to cyclamen propagated from seed, tissue culture varieties require a long time for bulking (up to 12 to 14 months) before they will flower uniformly and consistently. For this reason, most growers prefer to use large liners that have been adequately bulked up

and plant them about three months before their anticipated sale date.

Depending on geographic location, growers should obtain cyclamen liners between September and November. For example, growers in the South may require flowering cyclamen for mid-January sales and should plant liners at least 12 weeks earlier (mid-October).

'Something Magic' is a cool season perennial and should be grown at 24-hour average temperatures of 58-63° F after potting. Once flower buds are visible, the temperatures can be dropped slightly to 55° to help slow down development. They can be grown at any day length, as they are day-neutral plants. The length of the photoperiod does not have any effect on the time to flower or the number of blooms produced. Flower buds will not be initiated under extremely low light levels (less than 250 foot-candles); under low light conditions provide supplemental lighting delivering 300 to 700 foot-candles for at least 14 hours per day.

Availability

Cyclamen 'Something Magic' is brought to the industry by Terra Nova Nurseries (www.terravanurseries.com) in Tigard, Ore. It is most commonly available to growers as 30-cell plug liners from Terra Nova. www.gpn.com

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