



down to earth Marty Figley

Cyclamens like sunny spot

ALITTLE known fact about the Cyclamen (Cyclamen persicum), a plant seen at this time of year in the nurseries, is that it is considered the Christmas flower in Germany. Care of this lovely flower is simple, once you know what to do. Isn't that the case with everything we do?

Cyclamen have thick leaves of silvery green, with translucent stems and veins. The blossoms, in white and shades of pale pink through vivid red, some variegated and ruffled, are very showy.

A very bright area of your home which gets some direct sunshine should be the spot for a cyclamen. An east window is good. Temperatures 60-65 degrees during the day and around 50 degrees at night suit best and will help to prolong the blooming period. New buds can be encouraged by applying liquid fertilizer every two or three weeks. Keep the soil evenly moist, by watering from the top. Avoid getting water on the foliage.

After the blooming period is over, you may want to keep the plant. If so, place it in an area with a little less light and water as before.

If the leaves are stimulated to remain growing, the health of the tuber will be maintained, which will then send up next year's flowers. Withhold water so that the plant can enter a dormancy period in early summer. After this period it can be planted in a loose soil mixture in a pot with good drainage. The upper half of the tuber should be above the soil level.

ANOTHER PLANT seen at this time of year is the Norfolk Island Pine (Araucaria heterophylla). This evergreen tree with tiers of needle-set branches is very popular and does not require a very bright spot. Any location in the home other than a southern exposure will suit

and dinner, and stock your refrigerator with between-meal pickups — cold cuts, cheeses, "rabbit food," fruits, etc. If little ones are early risers, set out special cereals and bowls the night before so they can help themselves. Plug your coffee pot into a regular light timer so that it will be ready and waiting in the morning. Use disposable paper products, especially glasses, and/or assign cups and glasses to each person, marking them on the bottom. Eat out as often as you can afford.

Try to maintain a semblance of order. Living with unaccustomed clutter can be exhausting. Enlist your own family and your guests to help, including men and children; guests usually feel better if they can be involved.

Assign duties to everyone. Rotate meal cleanup duties, child care, etc. Plan at least two "pickup" times per day, perhaps right after breakfast and again before bedtime. Get enough sleep at night and take a short nap during the day.

Insist that guest children abide by house rules. If you don't allow toys in certain areas or feet on sofas, they can learn to respect those standards. Designate only one entry and exit door for children and provide space there for boots, coats, etc.

Most importantly, keep your sense of humor.



organizing Dorothy Lehmkuhl

Q. We have relatives arriving for several days over Christmas and I am always exhausted when they leave. Can you offer some ideas to help relieve the situation?

A. The combination of the holiday season and guests can be a great stress producer. If you are feeling pressured, first of all, back off from the hubbub and take a few minutes to be alone.

For instance, run a nice hot bubblebath and take time to relax every morning in your body. Tell yourself that you will do your best, if everything is not perfect, the world will not end. The time will pass and somehow you will get through it.

The next step is careful planning. Use a special planning notebook and make different lists for all the things which need to be done, when to do them and (most importantly) to whom you will delegate many of the tasks.

While you planning, keep in mind the word "KISS" (Keep It Simple, Sweetie). It's nice to entertain elaborately, but this is probably not the time for your most difficult recipes. Remember that your guests will enjoy their stay much more if you are relaxed and have time to be interested in them, instead of working constantly.

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