



*L to r, red & white cyclamen, cyclamen with alyssum border, expanded shale, Clivia miniata*

## FALL INTO WINTER (& FOOTBALL) WITH LOTS OF COLOR IN THE YARD!

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Nothing says Christmas like red and white cyclamen. In the shade container, I like to use mixed red and white cyclamen - not straight-line bands (this point would be in flower beds not containers) -- with white alyssum and add dark green English ivy in between the alyssum.

Miniature cyclamen get 6-8" tall and have a smaller habit than the larger growing ones. Cyclamen are bulbs. When planting, take care not to bury the bulb (where the leaves and flowers arise from the top, see below). Don't cover the crown when mulching. Plant the "crown" high to keep disease from attacking and killing the plant. Do not keep the soil too wet, let the soil dry out in between waterings.

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***Miniature cyclamen bloom and sprouting bulb***

Predictions indicate we're going to have a cold wet winter. Before planting, add expanded shale to those areas that do not drain well. Keep frost cloth handy to cover plants when temperatures drop to freezing so you won't lose flowers on cyclamen or snapdragons.

Clivia miniata is a fantastic winter bloomer in the shade garden and the cluster of orange flowers is very long lasting when protected from frost.

I love violas; they bloom so much better than pansies and have twice the number of flowers per plant! Houston is so cloudy in the winter, pansies don't bloom well as they like 6 hours of sun daily. Those cute little Johnny Jump-Ups jump right into your face, bloom in shade, sun and cloudy weather. They are the best performers through the winter and into the spring.



**L to r, Violas - Admire 'Orange and Purple', Flora Power ' Gold Purple Wing', Sorbet 'Citrus Mix' and Sorbet 'Penny Orange'**

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AND FOR THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANS - Many new varieties and bi-colors have been added to the trade. Above, left to right . . .

Admire series 'Orange and Purple' SCREAM "FALL IS HERE!" or when will it be here?

Floral Power series 'Gold Purple Wing' is the Viola for LSU, guaranteed to bring out the Bengal in the Tiger.

Sorbet 'Citrus Mix' or 'Penny Orange' certainly "Hook Those UT Horns!"

And below, l to r . . .



- A combo planting that literally bleeds red for the UH Coogs would be Dianthus chinensis 'Telstar Crimson' interspersed with 'Telstar White'.
- Penny series (closer to maroon) 'Red Blotch' with Penny 'White' "GIGS THOSE AGGIES"!

NO LUCK WITH SNAPS? I also want to offer a little advice to those gardeners who think they cannot grow snapdragons. You are keeping them TOO WET.

- Snapdragons like to dry out completely in between watering. If soil is too heavy add some expanded shale (see top of article) to improve drainage and aerate the soil permanently. Shale is porous and will absorb excess water until the soil dries out, then the water is released from the shale.
- Snapdragons have been hybridized to flower all winter instead of growing all winter and flowering in the spring. Some of my favorite series are:
- DWARF: Montego 'Orange Bicolor', 6-8". Snapshot and Snaptastic are two new series of dwarf snapdragons
- MEDIUM: Solstice or Liberty, 16-20"
- TALL: Rocket snaps get 4' tall and do not bloom until spring!

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L to r, Great snapdragons: 'Liberty' Linda photographed during a past dry spring, Montego 'Orange Bicolor.' 'Snapshot' dwarf, 'Snaptastic' dwarf and 'Solstice' medium.

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