

Propagating Clivia Seeds in Australia

(Melbourne Clivia Group)

SEED PREPARATION

- Pick the berries after they have started to change colour (a little earlier is also OK) and leave for 1-2 weeks for ease of peeling. In our club most people don't start picking *Clivia* berries until at least June, but for all species of *Clivia*, leave them on the plant for about 9 months. It is also fine to leave them until September, but the longer they stay on the plant the more likely it is that rodents (or children) will remove them.
- Break open the berry and remove the seeds while also cleaning away any pulp with your fingers. Take care when doing this because sometimes the seed may have started to shoot and you do not want to damage this. Remove the fine membrane around the seed.
- Soak the seeds in a solution of 1 tsp dishwashing liquid to one litre water for two hrs, or simply rinse in water. Let them dry on a paper towel for a few days. The removal of the membrane and cleaning the seeds is to reduce the likelihood of fungal infection.

SEED SOWING

The two key ingredients for *Clivia* seed germination are warmth and moisture. These combined should result in a small root appearing after about one month.

- There are many different methods used to successfully germinate the seed. Berries are usually picked in winter and so the challenge lies in exposing the seeds to consistent warmth.

Here are some suggestions.

a. Put some clean, damp sphagnum moss into a plastic container and lay the seeds on top. Some growers lightly cover the seeds with more sphagnum moss and some don't. Place a lid on the container and leave in a warm spot inside. Check occasionally and spray with water to keep the mixture moist.

b. Place the seeds in a zip lock bag with a little moisture or lay between two sheets of moist paper towel (keep them slightly moist).

c. Purchase a heatpad and place seeds in sphagnum moss in containers on the heatpad. Avoid putting a lid on the container to prevent any fungus. You need to water every day or two to sustain a moist environment. Heatpads can be bought online starting from about \$30.

d. Fill a pot with propagating mix to about two-thirds, water well and let drain for a while. Slightly press the seeds into the mix, leaving the top of the seed exposed. Keep the pots in a warm place, if possible, or at least out of the weather.

Some people put their seeds in a warm, shady position. Some germinate them on top of their fridge, some near heating ventilation, and the list goes on, but without consistent heat, the seeds will not germinate. So, while the seed can be planted in July in Melbourne, but left to the weather, they will not consistently shoot until about January because of the fickle spring weather.

- In the case of a, b, and c, above - when the seeds have produced small roots and leaves about 2-4cm long, plant in a pot using a seedling mix or other well-draining mix.

- If the seedlings start to jump out of the mix, lightly cover the lot with propagating mix again, otherwise just make a bigger space for the root with a dibber stick or pencil and place the root back into the mix. Roots can grow up to 10 cm long on some young seedlings within the first 6 months, so ensure enough root room is available. Do not break the roots. Just like mature plants, once a root is broken, the entire root dies. Seedlings may not grow a new root, so be careful.

- Depending upon the time of the year, keep moist by watering 2-3 times a week with a spray bottle or fine hose.

- Within the first few months of germination, it is generally possible to determine a seedlings flower colour. An orange flowered plant will have a red or purple base. A yellow, peach or green flowered plant will have no purple on the base, but it will be green in most cases. A variegated seedling will usually have variegation on the first couple of leaves.

It will be 4 or 5 years before your seedling flowers, but it is a key method of increasing your collection and developing both colours and flower form. It also allows you to adjust the size of the plant that you find desirable. While it takes a few months to germinate and grow on the young *Clivia*, it is a very interesting process. Give it a go!!!