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# GLOXINIAS

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## HUMBER NURSERIES "GREEN THUMB GUIDE"



Gloxinias have handsome, erect, bell-shaped flowers produced in abundance on strong stems arising from a broad rosette of leaves. They range in colour from white to rose, crimson and purple, with mixtures of these colours in the same flower.

Don't be alarmed if the rhizomes or "bulbs" you find inside the package are not like the Gloxinia rhizomes you have seen. They are now completely devoid of fuzzy roots and look more like a potato than a Gloxinia.

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### TEMPERATURE

It is often said that the temperature where Gloxinias are growing during the winter should not go below 10°C. Gloxinias growing in the basement under lights can be maintained at this temperature. These plants do best when the temperature is 18°C at night and 20°C during the day. These temperatures are also closer to living room conditions.

### SOIL

First of all, prepare a good Gloxinia soil made up of one part each of peat moss, good loam and sand. Alternatively, you could use Pro-Mix.

Put some broken pots or stones (for drainage) in the base of 12 or 15 cm pots, fill the pots with the mixture and plant a single rhizome in each. The rhizome should be set so that the top is level with the soil surface which, in turn, should be 2 cm below the rim of the pot to allow for watering.

If you can't tell which part of the rhizome is the top, start it into growth first in a medium of moist peat and sand and keep watching for the shoots to develop. Gloxinias, like most other plants, have the shoots at the top and roots at the bottom. On some rhizomes, the bottom is rounded and the top has a slight depression (is even concave).

Soak the soil well after potting, but from then until the rhizomes start to grow, water sparingly and only when the soil is dry to the touch. When the plants are showing lots of top growth, water them thoroughly, then allow to almost completely dry out then water heavily again. Repeating the process will maintain a flourishing plant. Try, at all times, to keep water off the foliage.

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### LIGHT

Place the plants in a window where they will get lots of light but no direct sunlight. A sunny window is ideal, but the plants should be shaded by a light curtain. As soon as flower buds form, feed the plants with liquid fertilizer. A good, all round type is one with a formula of about 20-20-20 used according to the manufacturer's directions.

When the plants are in flower, a cooler atmosphere will prolong the blooming period. After flowering has finished, reduce watering gradually until the leaves wilt and die. Then take the pots to the basement and store them for a couple of months. After this period of storage, shake the rhizomes out of the pots and start them all over again in the new soil.

Gloxinias may be propagated by leaves or cuttings. To propagate by leaves, choose those that are mature in summer and cut them into wedge-shaped pieces with stalks of the leaves forming the point of the wedge. Plant these pieces vertically and 2 cm deep in a mixture of sand and peat. Cuttings may also be made in spring by removing new shoots that are 2 cm long and inserting these all around the edge of a four inch pot that has been filled with a sand/peat mixture.

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## FERTILIZING

Because the Gloxinia is a “heavy” flowering plant, the fertilizer you use should contain sufficient nutrients to promote numerous new flower buds and also be able to sustain the existing ones. A 5-10-10 or 15-30-15 formula will provide ample nutrients to the leaves, stems and flowers when used according to directions at a frequency of every 4 to 6 weeks. There is no need to fertilize the dormant bulb.

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## WATERING

Gloxinias are sensitive to excess water, either around their roots or on the leaves. It is best to heavily water when the soil is dry. Try not to have water on the leaves or flowers as it may leave water spots and cause a “rot”.

## INSECTS/DISEASES

Gloxinias are prone to only the common house plant pests/diseases and are easily controlled.

Fungus gnats, white fly and stem rot are the common problems. “SAFERS” indoor house-plant controls are effective – organic solutions for most indoor pests and diseases.

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## REFLOWERING YOUR GLOXINIA

Once your Gloxinia has finished its flowering it is important to continually pinch or cut off both the old bloom and its stem. The plant will grow foliage for about 8 – 10 weeks and then begin to go dormant. At this time, the leaves die off and they should be cut back to the soil level. The dormant bulb can then be lifted out and stored in a cool, dark location in some dry peat moss or wood shavings in a paper bag or wood box. In about 10 – 12 weeks your bulb will show new shoots and it can once again be started in a pot to grow flowers and leaves.



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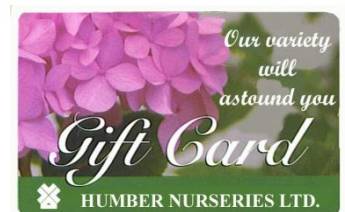
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