

GROWING HEPATICAS

POSITION: Hepaticas are hardy and can be grown outdoors but their small flowers do best when kept frost free in a greenhouse

COMPOST MIX: 1 part John Innes no.3, 1 part leaf mould, 1 part perlite and 1 part composted bark, with 3g of Vitax Q4 fertiliser and 2g of dolomitic limestone per litre of mix

REPOTTING: Repot carefully each year either in September or just after flowering in spring. Shake off the old compost and examine the roots, removing any damaged ones and cutting back the most vigorous root balls by a third if necessary

WATERING & FEEDING: Never let Hepaticas dry out. Keep them just moist all year round and increase watering in spring. Water early in the morning when it's cool and damp down the floor in warm weather to raise the humidity. Liquid feed with a balanced fertiliser in spring and autumn but not during the summer

SHADING: Their natural habitat is woodland so Hepaticas need heavy shading from spring, as soon as the flowers have finished, until late autumn. Winter light is then necessary to encourage good flowering the following season

VENTILATION: Hepaticas like to be well ventilated; at Wisley there are two fans blowing air on them constantly

PROPAGATION

Hepaticas can be divided during re-potting. Carefully tease plants apart and pot up individual crowns with healthy roots attached

Hepaticas can also be grown from seed but the offspring won't be identical. Collect fresh seed and sow immediately onto a mix of John Innes seed compost, leafmould and perlite. Cover with a thin layer of grit, water and place in a shady position. Seedlings will appear the following Spring. Leave them to develop during their first summer and then carefully pot them up individually in autumn