

Lenten Rose

Lenten Rose aka Hellebore to be exact, is a beautiful winter blooming plant. In winter we don't have too much to choose from. However, I'm not sure why these winter beauties seem to be overlooked. Hellebore has beautiful foliage, but even better it has interesting flowers that last for months. They come in a variety of colors ranging from white/green through pink, deep purple and red tones. Once established in a good location they will re-seed. Seedlings will not be true to the parent, but think of the possibilities.

Size: 2'-2 ½' depending on variety

Exposure: Full sun in winter, partial shade the rest of the year.

How to Plant: Plant in well drained amended soil and do not disturb. Hellebores hate to be disturbed.

Fertilize: Fertilize sparingly, perhaps once or twice a year.

Propagation: Purchase potted plants. If a plant is well established it may produce seedlings. Transplant seedlings in early spring. Hellebores resent being moved and can take up to 2 years to recover, so dividing is not recommended.

Water needs: Regular watering; do not over water or let dry out.

Soil: Prefers well-drained soil amended with organic matter. Plants prefer alkaline soil but will grow in slightly acid conditions, except for *H. niger*, which must have alkaline soil.

Snapshot: Hellebores are one of the few plants that flower in winter. *H. orientalis* likes zones 2b-10, so most should be able to grow it. They are very interesting with nodding flowers that bloom for several months. The flowers have a more leaf-like texture and often come in white and green, through pink and red to deep purples. Some are cupped or bell shaped. The petals are actually sepals that cover the true flower and are surrounded by a clump of stamens. Sunset magazine just recommended HGC (Helleborus Gold Collection) which is a white variety that faces up and out, instead of nodding. It develops a blush when touched by frost. Though they need to find the perfect location and want to be left alone, once established they make a wonderful statement in your winter garden.

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