

Christmas Cactus have been hybridized for over 100 years. These long-lived plants are easy to grow and it's not unusual for individual plants to be passed down from generation to generation.

They are available in many colors including pink, peach, orange, red, lavender, purple, fuschia and white.

Native to the foothills of the Organ Mountains in southeast Brazil, these forest plants live as epiphytes (air plants) that grow in the cracks of rocks or in the forks of tree limbs where there is just enough organic material for the roots.

Flowering

The plant will set buds when temperatures are cool and when the length of day and night are about equal (December). During this time, care should be taken not to let the plant dry out; nor should it be moved. Under-watering and moving the plant can cause buds and blooms to drop.

Blooming requires long uninterrupted dark periods, about 12 hours each night, beginning in about mid-October. This also includes security or street lights.

Light

Keep your Christmas Cactus away from direct sunlight, they prefer bright but indirect light. Excessive light will cause the leaves to burn or redden.

Water

Christmas Cactus is a tropical plant, and not as drought tolerant as its desert relatives.

Too much watering causes white rot and the leaves will likely fall off. The soil should be evenly moist for best growth. The rule of thumb is, less water is better than too much.

Water thoroughly when the top inch or so of soil feels dry to the touch. The length of time between waterings will vary with the air temperature, amount of light, rate of growth and relative humidity. Generally, water once or twice per week.

Fertilize

To keep your plant in good health, fertilize 2 to 4 times during the growing season (April-Sept) at half strength with **Jack's Classic 20-20-20**, an all purpose liquid houseplant fertilizer.

Repotting & Pruning

Prune the Christmas Cactus one month after it blooms to encourage the plant to branch out, or wait until March when new growth begins.

If your plant tends to dry out and/or wilt frequently, it's probably time to repot it into a slightly larger container. The best time to repot is from February to April with well-draining cactus/succulent potting soil. **TIP:** they flower best when somewhat pot-bound.

Problems

If the cactus starts to shrivel in its rest period, it needs more water. Give it a good soak in a bowl or sink filled with water, allowing it to sit for about a half hour. Then lift it out and let it drain.

If the plant shrivels up and it is not due to being too dry, it may have crown rot. Crown rot is a sign that the roots are rotting. This means that either the plant has been over-watered or that the soil mixture is wrong. The plant cannot survive this, so take cuttings from healthy stems before it is too late.

