

HOLIDAY CACTUS CARE



Holiday Cactus, with their beautiful seasonal blooms, are a long-lived favorite among houseplant lovers. It is not unusual for a single plant to be passed down from generation to generation. The three most common Holiday Cacti are named for the time of year their blooms appear: Thanksgiving Cactus (*Schlumbergera truncate*), Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgestii*), and Easter Cactus (*Schlumbergera gaertneri*).

Despite their name, Holiday Cactus are not like typical desert cacti. They are native to the coastal forests of Brazil and prefer more humid conditions, moderate light, and seasonal temperature changes. Each variety has unique blooms and foliage structure. To keep your plants happy and healthy, follow the tips below:

BASIC CARE

Soil & Water

Holiday Cactus likes to be root bound. If you want to repot your Holiday Cactus wait until after it is done blooming and choose a pot only slightly larger than its previous one. Use a good cactus soil mix and ensure that the pot has adequate drainage holes.

In general, keep the soil just a little moist between watering but do not let the plant sit in water. Reduce your watering during bud formation. Increase the humidity while the plant is blooming by keeping the soil evenly moist or by placing the pot on top of a saucer of water and pebbles.

Temperature & Light

Treat your Holiday Cactus as a regular houseplant for most of the year. Place it in moderate or bright indirect light away from cold drafts and hot air vents. Holiday Cactus need 4-6 weeks of cool temperature (50-55° F) to trigger blooming. By placing your plant outside or putting it in a cool windowsill this temperature change will be satisfied.

In the Pacific Northwest, you can put your Holiday Cactus outside in dappled sunlight or light shade for the summer. Put the plant outdoors when nights average above 50° F and bring it back inside when the nighttime temperature drops below 50° F.

Cooler temperature is usually enough to trigger bloom. However, if your plant is still not setting buds you may need to begin adjusting its light cycle 4-6 weeks before the holiday. Move your plant into a dark closet to artificially shorten its' daylight (8-10 hrs) and lengthen its' night (12-14 hrs). surface. Planting too deeply will eventually kill the plant.

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Fertilizer

Fertilize your Holiday Cactus with an all-purpose liquid houseplant fertilizer once a month. In the spring and summer, increase your application to once every two weeks. Give your plant a break from fertilizing after it blooms.

Propagation

The best time to propagate your Holiday Cactus is in late spring or early summer. Twist off short pieces of the stem 2-3 segments in length. Let the pieces dry for 2-4 days so the ends can callous over. Then place the pieces in a growing medium and keep them warm (70° F). Water lightly and keep the medium moist. If you tend to overwater your plants, use a cactus soil mix. If you want to stimulate quicker root growth, you can propagate in water or a 50/50 peat moss/perlite mix.

Troubleshooting

- **Does not bloom:** Needs proper light and temperature period (see above). Needs a fertilizer higher potassium.
- **Leaves are limp and wrinkly:** Needs more water
- **Drops flower buds early:** Too much water or drastic temperature changes.
- **Bumps or fuzz on leaves:** Treat for bugs like mealy bug or scale.