



## Guide to Christmas Cactus Care

Thanksgiving cactus and Christmas cactus both unintentionally get referred to as Christmas cactus, so we will use the name Christmas cactus to keep the information general. But Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) blooms at Thanksgiving and the stem segments have 'pointed teeth' edges and yellow pollen. Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera russelliana*), blooms several weeks later and has more rounded, scalloped edges to the leaf segments and pink pollen. But in recent years there has been so many crosses between the two, it's hard to tell which variety you may have. Some of the hybrid crosses are known as *S. x buckleyi*. Regardless of which variety you may have, they all have beautiful blooms with interesting leaf segments and a nice arching habit.



### Taking Care of Your Christmas Cactus

#### **Soil**

Provide well draining soil by mixing one part sand with two parts regular potting soil.

#### **Temperature**

The best indoor temperature range is 65 to 80° F. It can be moved to an outdoor location during the summer months, but avoid direct sunlight that can scorch the leaves.

#### **Light**

Provide bright, indirect light from an East or West facing window. Do not expose to direct sunlight. Keep away from cold drafts or excessive heat, like above heat registers. That area can quickly dry out plants.

#### **Blooming**

The shorter, cooler days of autumn trigger bloom production. If your cactus seems to stall in producing buds, help it along by shortening the amount of bright light. Make sure it received 12-14 hours of darkness per day beginning around mid-October, in order to have blooms by the holidays.

#### **Watering**

When the soil feels dry to the touch approximately one inch down in the soil, it's time to water. Unlike traditional prickly cactus that can go completely dry in between watering, Christmas cactus like to be kept moderately moist. Be careful of over-watering. Too much water can cause root rot.

#### **Fertilizing**

Two to four times per year with a 20-20-20 fertilizer is sufficient. Don't fertilize approximately one month before buds start forming.

\*Potential bud drop – may be due to large fluctuations in temperature, moving the plant to a different location with a different environment or improper watering like keeping the plant too wet or too dry.