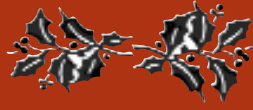


# Christmas Cactus Care Guide



A Christmas cactus in full bloom is a great gift idea for that special gardener. However, along with the bounty of blooms, send these tips for keeping the plant looking its best.

Watering seems to be the source of most problems with the Christmas cactus. The plant is not a true cactus and is not quite as drought tolerant as the name infers. However, it is a succulent plant and can store a reasonable amount of water in its leaves. Water thoroughly when the top half becomes dry. The length of time between waterings will vary with the air temperature, amount of light, rate of growth and relative humidity.

To ensure budset for late December bloom, give plant cool night temperatures 50-55 degrees F and 12 to 14 hours of darkness a day during the month of November. To prolong blooms, feed with a liquid fertilizer every day during the growing season.

Well-drained soil is a must for Christmas cactus. Use *Cactus Mix* when potting or mix your own by combining two parts plain potting soil with one part clean sand or vermiculite.

While Christmas Cactus can adapt to low light, more abundant blooms are produced on plants that have been exposed to high light density. Keep the plant in a sunny location indoors. Plants moved outdoors for the summer should be kept in a shady or semi-shady location.

Pruning your Christmas Cactus after blooming will encourage the plant to branch out. Remove a few sections of each stem by pinching them off with your fingers or cutting with a sharp knife.