

HOLIDAY ZYGOCACTUS

Schlumbergera is a genus of cacti that has approximately six to nine known species. They can be found in nature on the coastal mountain ranges of south-eastern Brazil. These plants grow on trees and rocks as they are either epiphytic or epilithic meaning that they cling to either trees or rocks. The common names of these cacti tend to refer to their blooming time. They are frequently known as Christmas cactus, Thanksgiving cactus, crab cactus, or holiday cactus. Their flowers can come in a variety of colors such as pink, white, yellow, orange, red, or purple. The cultivars of Christmas cactus fall into two main groups named *truncata* and *buckleyi*. The *truncata* group of cacti has long stem segments with pointed teeth and horizontal flowers. And the *buckleyi* group has shorter stem segments with rounded, symmetrical teeth and flowers that hang down. The *buckleyi* group tends to flower later and is more likely to be called Christmas cactus.



Latin Name: Schlumbergera
Type: Evergreen flowering houseplant
Hardiness: Zone 9-11, not frost tolerant
Size: 1'x 2'
Exposure: Bright indirect light
Soil: Moisture retaining potting mix
Growth Rate: Medium
Growth Habit: Epiphytic

Where should I plant my holiday cactus?

Holiday cactus are a forgiving and low maintenance houseplant choice. They appreciate moderate light while tolerating some direct sun and thorough watering. To encourage regular cycles of blooming they require a dormancy period in between. To rebloom a Christmas or Thanksgiving cactus, darkness for 12-14 hours should be introduced for 6 to 8 weeks. Keep the plants cool following their blooming period in a space about 50 degrees. Otherwise, place the plants in a bright area of the home with temperatures between 55-80 degrees to maintain their optimum health.

How much water will my holiday cactus need?

These plants prefer to remain evenly moist. They enjoy relative humidity and appreciate being misted while they are in bloom regularly. Watering about once per week depending on the size of the plant should suffice, however it is beneficially to regularly check your plant.

When should I fertilize my holiday cactus?

Holiday cactus require a balanced fertilizer to perform and respond well to Potash or a potassium-based fertilizer. They can either be fed with a granular or water-soluble fertilizer about once per month.

Are there any pests I should be aware of?

Holiday cactus are susceptible to some common houseplant pests and diseases such as mealy bugs, basal stem rot, *botrytis blight*, and root rot. Mealy bugs or other pests can be easily treated with insecticidal soap or a systemic. Blight or rot diseases are generally caused by overwatering and can be corrected with a proper watering schedule.