

Holiday Cactus

These succulents are called holiday cactus because their habit is to bloom around the time of Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter. You can tell which holiday cactus you have by looking at its leaves. The Christmas cactus has rounded notches on the margins of the stem while the Thanksgiving cactus has pointed tooth-like notches. The Easter cactus has tooth-like notches with tiny spines on the segments.

Caring for these plants is simple.

Soil – they require well drained soil such as cactus and succulent soil. The best time to repot your holiday cactus is in the spring but it can be done anytime.

Light – If it is indoors, place it in bright but indirect light. Direct light and excessive heat will scorch the leaves and cause buds to drop. It can be kept outdoors in the summer in a full to partial shade location.

Water – When in bloom, water weekly or when the top half of the soil becomes dry. A lack of water will cause the buds to drop. After the flowers fade, stop watering for about 6 weeks. This lets the plant rest. During the spring and summer keep the plant consistently moist. Root rot is a common problem.

Fertilizing – In the spring, begin fertilizing with an all-purpose houseplant food mixed at half strength. Continue until October.

Pruning – They occasionally need some pruning. The best time is in June. Snip off the top 2 to 3 segments of each stem. This will make the plant bushier and promote flower development.

Re-bloom – Holiday cactus need 6 weeks of cool (55 to 60 degrees). During this time stop fertilizing and reduce watering. Once the buds set, resume watering.