

Christmas Cactus Care

Did you buy or receive a Christmas Cactus this year? Would you like to keep it and have it bloom during the holidays next Year? If so, read on.

There are two kinds of “Christmas Cactus” that are recognized, but the more common one that you probably have is *Schlumbergera truncate* which is actually the Crab or Thanksgiving Cactus. It blooms between Thanksgiving and Christmas and is more reliable to get to bloom than the true Christmas Cactus, *Schlumbergera bridgesii*.

After your cactus has stopped blooming, remove the spent flowers, though many have probably already dropped off. This plant is a houseplant so treat it accordingly. Keep it in a moderately lit room near a window so it can survive. Water sparingly and do not fertilize until late spring. When the temperature outside consistently reaches 50 degrees, the cactus can be placed outdoors in a protected area. Caution: no direct sun! It can also remain in a brightly lit room inside all year but is easier to get to bloom by placing it outside.

In the Fall, it will need to be brought indoors when the night temperatures fall below 50 degrees. It requires cool temperatures and 12 hours of darkness for at least 10 days for bud formation. This may be accomplished outside if there are no severe cool spells in the Fall or you can make artificial conditions inside to meet this requirement. Once you see the bud formation, the amount of light does not matter. However, these plants are very sensitive to warm or cold temperatures and do not like to be moved once they start budding. At this time, water occasionally and mist often as it likes high humidity. Enjoy the bright cascading blooms for another year and repeat the above process for future blooms.

Resources:

Michigan State Extension fact sheet – Christmas Cactus
OSU HLA 6411: Houseplants
Article in the 2019 Fall e-Newsletter