

Christmas Cactus: Feed Your Christmas Cactus for Next Flowering

Schlumbergera (Christmas cactus) is a mouthful-of-a-name for a species of plant native to Brazil that has become a popular houseplant for its spectacular seasonal blooming habit that ranges in color from pale lavender to yellow, salmon, pink, and bright red. (It is, incidentally, pollinated by hummingbirds in the wild.) As you might have guessed, it isn't a true cactus, but has flattened, succulent leaves that sprout blossoms from the tips. It is, more precisely, an epiphyte, a plant that lives on another (trees, in this case) without sapping its nutrients. There are several varieties, and most are in bloom around Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter and are commonly given as gifts while in bloom. Schlumbergera are long-lived, too, and easy to propagate, so they often become heirlooms and mother plants for generations of pass-me-down cuttings.

If your Schlumbergera has stopped blooming, it is easy to bring into bloom again with just a small amount of extra care.

After flowering, Schlumbergeras with a minimal amount of water. This will encourage stems. This will encourage season. After the resting period, only when the soil is dry in the of 2 oz/gallon AGGRAND 4-3-3 Sulfate of Potash once a month. Don't let the plant sit in water at any time – empty the water saucer or water it in a sink.



benefit from four to six weeks of rest. At this point, prune any wayward increased flower production next begin regular watering again, doing so top one inch. Fertilize with a mixture and 1oz/gallon AGGRAND Kelp and

Your Christmas cactus can move outside into dappled shade (never direct sun) after the last frost. It will perk up considerably as you continue the monthly feedings. In late summer or fall, when frost is forthcoming, bring it back indoors and stop fertilizing so bud development can begin.

Flowering is stimulated by either of two conditions: low temperature or low light. If the Christmas cactus can be kept between 55 and 60 degrees F. for the next six weeks, bud development will begin. If ambient temperatures are too high, then the plant must be provided with at least 13-15 hours of uninterrupted darkness. Either put it in a closet when you come home from work and bring it out again before you leave in the morning, or cover the plant with a dark cloth or bag for the appropriate time each day. When buds begin to form, give the plant more warmth and light, water regularly to keep the soil moist (not wet), and you're on your way to the next flower show.