

Thanksgiving Cactus

GENERAL INFORMATION

This tropical cactus blooms in time to brighten winter's darkest days and the holiday season, when most of the plant kingdom is at rest. The Thanksgiving cactus is very similar to the Christmas cactus and most people don't even realize that they are different plants. The Christmas cactus has the common red-colored flowers, while the Thanksgiving Cacti come in many bright colors since most of the plants are hybrids. With a little searching, pink, purple, golden yellow, orange, red and even some lovely white flower cacti can be found. Flowers come at the ends of what look like flattened stems, or perhaps leaves, but these are actually called "joints," neither leaf nor branch but a little of both. Buds form each year as early as September and may open anytime between November and January. Plants are almost certain to flower but the goal is to get masses of blooms.

LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE

Very tolerant of room temperatures, this plant grows best in a north, west or east-facing window, away from the burning midday sun. Keep away from radiators when in bud.

WATER AND SOIL

Because of their tropical origins, they need a very rich, porous soil that drains rapidly. One way to achieve this is by adding coarse leafmold to a standard potting mix. Repot at the beginning of the first growth period and don't transplant for several years. Water regularly while in flower and during both of the growth periods; water very sparingly during rest periods.

FERTILIZE

Very weak feedings during growth periods.

PROPAGATION

Cut off individual "joints" and root in damp sand.

COMMENTS

Year-round Care:

Dec. - Feb. When finished blooming, Cactus needs about two months rest. Give almost no water or fertilizer.

March - May Sprouts will appear at tips of every joint. Begin to water now and add a little diluted fertilizer to water occasionally. Repot only if necessary.

June - July After growth spurt, they need a second rest, so again, water sparingly and add no fertilizer. Do not let soil dry completely.

August - September Increase watering again. Don't let plant dry out! Keep plant in one place since sudden changes in light or drafts may cause the buds to fall off. Pinch off shoots with no buds.