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Christmas Cactus Care

Since the Christmas cactus is a tropical plant it will require watering on much the same basis as any other type of tropical plant. A good procedure to follow is to water the plants thoroughly and then allow about the top inch of soil to dry before watering again. However, during the fall and winter months, the plants should be watered less frequently in order to get them to bloom.

Christmas cactus require about 50 to 60 percent humidity. So it's a good practice to place a glass, vase or tray of water near the plant. As the water evaporates it will provide the humidity the cactus needs. A humidity tray is another method of providing the humidity the Christmas cactus requires. This is done by filling a waterproof saucer with gravel, then adding water halfway up the gravel. Place the pot on the gravel surface.

The Christmas cactus should never be placed near a door that opens and closes to the outside. Likewise, keep it away from heating ducts or near the fireplace or drafty areas.

One of the most frustrating things that can happen to Christmas cactus is after the flower buds have developed they drop off the plant. Bud drop can be caused by anyone of several different conditions. Usually it's because of over-watering, lack of humidity, insufficient light, draft or temperature extremes.

After the Holidays

After The Christmas holiday season, the Christmas cactus should be given about a 30 day rest. Again place it in a cool room and provide limited water. Don't worry if it loses a few leaves or joints and appears weak during this rest period.

This is not the time to pinch, prune or shape a Christmas cactus. The best time is when the new growth begins in March or early April.

Likewise, the best time for repotting a cactus is in February, March or April. However, keep in mind the plant will flower best if it's kept in a container where it's pot-bound. If your Christmas cactus is given proper care and is placed in the right location, it's not unusual for it to flower several times throughout the year.