

Holiday Flowering Plants

Flowering plants are an important part of the holiday season bringing color, warmth, nostalgia and joy to any home or office. Please be aware that these magnificent plants are tropical in origin and need to be carefully wrapped before being taken outdoors to protect them from the icy cold wind and freezing outdoor temperatures. When transporting holiday plants, do not leave them in an un-heated automobile for any length of time. Transport them in heated passenger compartment, not in the trunk or in the back of a pick-up truck. **These plants can be killed or severely damaged by the cold!**

Christmas Cactus

(*Schlumbergera bridgesii*)

and

Thanksgiving Cactus

(*Schlumbergera truncata*)

Both Christmas & Thanksgiving cacti are members of a genus of about 6 species of epiphytic or rock dwelling cacti from the tropical rainforest in southeast Brazil.

Christmas Cactus have flat, leaf-like jointed stems with rounded teeth on the margin with fuschia-like, bright red, hanging flowers that bloom in December. Thanksgiving Cactus have the same flat, leaf-like jointed stems with pointed, forward projecting teeth and flowers of varied color with yellowish anthers being forced to bloom in time for Thanksgiving.

Year-Round Care For Christmas & Thanksgiving Cacti

- Carefully unwrap your plants; keep them in a well-lit spot away from drafts. Keep the soil evenly moist.
- From April to June, the plants should receive indirect bright light and plenty of water. You may place the plants

outdoors in late May in a partially shaded area out of direct sun.

- Fertilize with Electra once a month.
- In July and August keep the plants dry to promote flower bud development then resume keeping soil moist.
- Thanksgiving cactus must be brought indoors in mid-September; Christmas cactus may remain outdoors through mid-October but must be brought in before a frost.
- Once inside, the plants should be placed in a cool room kept at 50-65°.
- To force blooms, your plants should be in total darkness from 5pm-8am for 8-10 weeks before you want them to bloom. For total darkness, try placing a large paper bag or cardboard box over your plants at night.
- Water sparingly and mist at least 2-3 times a week. During this forcing period the plants must not be moved or turned, and there should be no temperature changes or drafts.

Gloxinia (*Sinningia*)

A cousin to African Violets, gloxinia are a tuberous perennial from tropical forests in Central and South America. They have fuzzy, large, oval, fleshy green leaves and produce showy clusters of trumpet- or bell-shaped flowers that come in variations of red, white, purple as well as multi-colored.

Caring For Your Gloxinia

- Carefully unwrap your plants; keep them in a well-lit spot away from drafts. Keep the soil evenly moist.
- Gloxinia are best maintained at 65-75°; they will remain in bloom for several weeks.
- Fertilize your gloxinia with Electra once a month.
- After the blooms fade, remove the spent flowers, reduce watering, remove the dead/dying leaves and allow the tubers to rest for 3-4 months in totally dry soil.
- After this “rest period,” re-pot in fresh soil such as Pro-Mix, resume watering

and place in bright indirect light. Fertilize with Electra once a month. In 8 to 12 weeks your gloxinia will bloom again.

Norfolk Island Pine

(*Araucaria heterophylla*)

This stately, sub-tropical coniferous evergreen is often grown in northern regions as a houseplant and adorned with holiday lights and ornaments at Christmas time. Originally from Norfolk Island in the South Pacific Ocean, east of Australia, Norfolk Island Pines can reach a height of over 100 feet in the wild, but remain much smaller when grown indoors.

Caring for Your Norfolk Island Pine

- When you bring your Norfolk Island Pine into your home or office, carefully unwrap it and place in full sun. Keep soil evenly moist, occasionally letting soil go dry between waterings.
- Temperature range should be between 50 F. and 70 F., but will tolerate warmer temperatures.
- Fertilize with Electra once a month spring, summer and fall. Do not fertilize in winter.

Cyclamen

(*Cyclamen persicum*)

A tuberous perennial with heart-shaped, deep green leaves that are often silver-marbled on top and pale or purplish green underneath. The flowers are sweet-scented and come in pink, red or white.

Members of the Cyclamen genus can be found in habitats ranging from alpine woodland, from damp woods to dry sands and from the Mediterranean east to Iran and south to Somalia. They like cool temperatures and can be grown outdoors. The tubers should be lifted before the ground freezes.

Caring for Your Cyclamen

- Carefully unwrap your cyclamen and place them in a well-lit spot away from drafts. Keep the soil evenly moist.
- Cyclamen like cool temperatures that are between 50-70° and will stay in bloom for many weeks if kept cool and out of direct sunlight. Avoid placing them near the heat of television sets, radiators and heating ducts. Fertilize with Electra at half strength every two weeks while they are flowering.
- As the flowers fade, remove them, reduce watering and stop feeding your plants.
- Remove dead/dying leaves as they appear. When there are no leaves left stop watering and let the tuber rest for at least 4-6 weeks in dry soil stored in a cool (50°) room.

- After the rest period, re-pot your tubers in fresh soil such as Pro-Mix, resume watering & feed with full-strength Electra once a month as new leaves form.
- Cyclamen will go dormant when temperatures rise above 70°; do not be surprised if your plants appear to be dying. Rest assured they are merely 'resting' in the heat.

Kalanchoe

(*Kalanchoe*)

Kalanchoes are part of a group of bushy, perennial succulents similar to cactus but without thorns. They have fleshy, oval, softly-toothed, glossy, dark green leaves with clusters of small tubular shaped red, pink, white, orange or yellow flowers.

Besides being great holiday plants, kalanchoes make great flowering houseplants and stay in bloom for months at a time. They will tolerate occasional drought conditions (if you forget to water them) and can even tolerate low light for short periods of time which allows you to use them for brightening dark corners of your home or office.

Caring for Your Kalanchoe

- Carefully unwrap your kalanchoe and place it in a well-lit spot away from drafts. Keep soil evenly moist while the plant is in bloom.
- Kalanchoe indoors in direct sun in the fall and winter and bright indirect light in spring and summer. Ideal temperature range should be 50-70°.
- Fertilize with Electra once a month when plants are not in bloom.
- To get your kalanchoe to bloom again, after the blooms fade cut the plant back to the first pair of leaves. Keep it in bright, indirect light and fertilize monthly until new flowers appear. They are known to bloom several times a year if conditions are right.

HOLIDAY FLOWERING PLANTS

Christmas Cactus
Thanksgiving Cactus
Gloxinia
Norfolk Island Pine
Cyclamen
Kalanchoe



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