

# CHRISTMAS CACTUS

## *Schlumbergera truncata*



### Characteristics

- Succulent
- Zone: 10 to 12
- Height: 0.75 to 1.00 feet
- Spread: 1.00 to 2.00 feet
- Bloom Time: Seasonal bloomer
- Bloom Description: Red, purple, pink, white
- Sun: Part shade
- Water: Dry to medium
- Maintenance: Low
- Flower: Showy
- Leaf: Evergreen
- Tolerant: Dry

### Culture

The cactus is also commonly called the Christmas cactus. It grows best in light shade. The secret of good flower bud production involves temperature and dark (photoperiod) control. For best flowering provide 1) Bright light, 2) Night temperatures between 55° and 65° F, and 3) Long nights – thirteen hours or more of continuous darkness each day is required before flowering will occur. Do not let the soil dry out either. Reduce watering from fall through spring. Fertilize plants and reduce fertilizer during the fall and early winter. The Christmas cactus flowers best when kept somewhat potbound. Repotting is necessary only about once in three years.

### Noteworthy Characteristics

It is a popular, winter-flowering houseplant available in a wide variety of colors including red, purple, oranges, pinks and creams.

### Problems

This cactus commonly drops unopened flower buds, which may be induced by an excessive number of buds or a sudden change in temperature, light or other environmental factors. Lack of flowering is often due to light interrupting the long night period (13 hours) that is required for flowering initiation to occur. The major disease is root rot, which can be prevented by avoiding excessive watering. Insects and related pests include mealybugs, soft brown scale, red spider mites and aphids.

### Garden Uses

In its native area, *Schlumbergera truncata* is grown outdoors as an epiphyte or in rock gardens. In cooler climates, this plant can be grown in baskets or pots for brightly-lit window sills. It is sold primarily around the holiday season as a gift or decorative item.

*Courtesy of Missouri Botanical Society Plant Finder*