Holiday Cactus

Schlumbergera and Rhapsidopsis are native to the tropical rain forests of South America. In the rain forest, the holiday cactus grows as an epiphyte (a tree perching plant). Although this strange growing habit is often seen in orchids and bromiliads, holiday cactus are true members of the cactus family

WATER

Because of their growing habit, holiday cactus like to be potted in a soil mix that drains quickly. Water your plant thoroughly. Then allow the soil surface to dry to the touch. Don't let your holiday cactus dry out completely. Remember, it's not a desert cactus and it does not want to become parched dry.

LIGHT

Holiday cactus prefer bright light, or even some direct sun. Light levels that are too low will make your plant leggy and weak.

FERTILIZER

While your holiday cactus is growing, fertilize with a balanced all-purpose, or high acid fertilizer. Periodically water with distilled water to leach any salt build-up out of the soil.

TRIMMING

Pinch your plant back after it has finished blooming. At the end of each branch, hold the last leaflet between the thumb and index finger, twist and pull. The leaflet should pop right off. A sharp, clean pair of scissors work just as well. Trimming will insure a stronger, fuller plant.

SPECIAL NOTES

The bloom of a holiday cactus is triggered by the length of daylight, and cooler temperatures (40 to 65 degrees) at night. Plants set bud when they receive 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of dark. This naturally occurs in the late fall, and the early spring. Keeping your plant in a location where a house light, or street light shines on it at night, may prevent it from setting bud.