

Organic Newsletter

Caring for Cacti!

During the holiday season while searching for a hostess gift, inevitably you will see holiday cacti in your store's floral section. More commonly known as the "Christmas cactus", the blooms can vary in color from white, pink, red, lavender and peach.

These cacti (*Schulmbergera*) are natives to the Brazilian forests and are epiphytes, which mean they use another plant or object for support.

However, there is also a "Thanksgiving cactus" -which blooms about a month earlier- and they are often confused with one another.

The way to tell them apart is by their phylloclades, or what we would assume are their leaves. Phylloclades (Latin for leaf-like branches) are actually modified flattened stems that perform photosynthesis.

The phylloclades on the Christmas cactus have lobes that are rounded, where the Thanksgiving cactus have pointed/serrated lobes.



Christmas cactus
(*Schulmbergera bridgesii*)



Thanksgiving cactus
(*Schulmbergera truncata*)

These tropical plants prefer bright sunlight in the fall and winter whereas the same conditions during the spring and summer can cause yellowing.



They prefer a well-drained growing medium, having 40%-20% perlite will also help with the aeration. The cacti are also tolerant of slightly dry soil during the spring and summer; water only when soil is dry to the touch. During the fall and winter once flower buds have been set, the soil should be kept evenly moist to avoid the plant dropping its newly made buds.

Another factor to keep in mind which goes against the grain for many gardeners is that they prefer to be kept slightly pot-bound. Repotting is advised in the spring every three years.

Holiday cacti have a high requirement for magnesium so fertilizing monthly with Epsom salts at a rate of 1 teaspoon per gallon is recommended. If you are also using a complete fertilizer

such as a 20-20-20, do not give the cactus both within the same week and all fertilizations should be stopped in late summer for better flowering in the fall.

The Christmas and Thanksgiving cacti set their flower buds in the fall in response to the cooler temperatures and shortened day light hours.

Ideally the temperature should be around 60°F-68°F. If temperatures dip lower than 60°F it will still set flower buds but growth will be slowed and if the temperature dips below 50°F the still forming buds will be more likely to drop off the plant.

In regards to light for flower production, they will need 8-10 hours of bright light a day; meaning 14 hours or more of uninterrupted darkness. Some experts also suggest keeping the plants away from any artificial light as they believe that it may interrupt the process.

If attempting to increase flowering using photoperiod, you will want to begin this process around mid-September. You will need to continue this for the next six weeks. However, as little as two hours of light during their “dark-time” can disrupt the bud set, but once set, the photoperiod will no longer affect them.



Flower bud development

Some experts also recommend pinching off any forming phylloclades at the tips that are less than 0.4” long at the end of September. This will help flower buds set on the mature phylloclades.

If you do suddenly see a drop of flower buds this could be due to a sudden change in their environment or possibly that the plant set too many buds.

In general these cacti are easy to care for as long you don’t over water which can cause root rot. Also important to mention is due to their tropical origins they will not fare well if left out overnight when temperatures drop below 50°F.



During the time of year when the trees are bare and our gardens sleep, you can have a bit of spring to warm the cold nights until the warm weather returns with these wonderful holiday plants.

~*~

**We wish you all the best in this
upcoming year!**

~The Organically Green Team

~*~

“Sometimes our fate resembles a fruit tree in winter. Who would think that those branches would turn green again and blossom, but we hope it, we know it.”

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Plants for the Winter!

December:

Prairifire Crabapple
(*Malus 'Prairifire'*)



- ❖ Deciduous small tree 15'-20' in height and width
- ❖ Prefers full sun and well drained moist soil
- ❖ Flowers are slightly fragrant, deep pink-red (1.5" diameter) in spring.
- ❖ Produces small, purplish-red crabapples (to 1/2" diameter) which mature in the fall. The fruits are persistent and attractive to birds.
- ❖ Fall color is green, yellow or orange
- ❖ This hybrid is reported to have high disease resistance

January:

Goshiki Osmanthus, False Holly
(*Osmanthus heterophyllus 'Goshiki'*)



- ❖ A small slow growing evergreen shrub , 3'- 5' tall by 3'-4' wide
- ❖ Dense, upright form
- ❖ Prefers full sun to part shade, fertile, moist well-drained acidic soils, will tolerate a slightly higher pH
- ❖ Spiny leaves similar to holly; pinkish-bronze new growth that matures to a mixture of green, gold, and cream

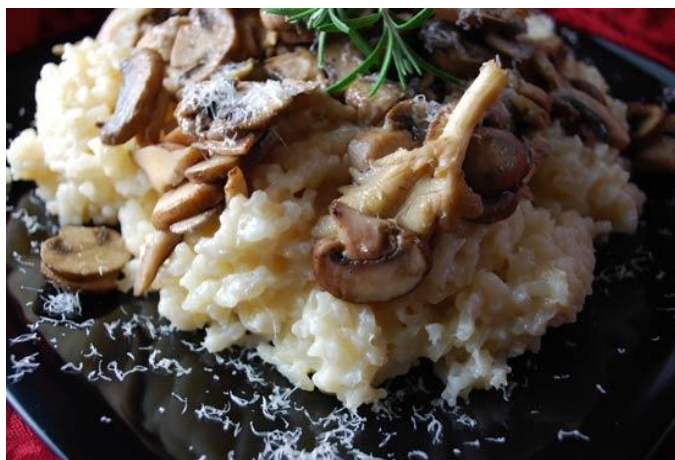
February:

Winter Jasmine
(*Jasminum nudiflorum*)



- ❖ A multistemmed deciduous shrub 3'-4' tall, 4'-7' wide
- ❖ Arching form; has green stems visible in winter
- ❖ Blooms in early winter without leaves, bright yellow flowers
- ❖ Adapts to soil but prefers good drainage; will even do well in poor soils
- ❖ Prefers sun but will tolerate shade, which will cause a reduction in flowers

Organically Grown



Crock Pot Risotto with Gourmet Mushrooms

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons olive oil, divided use
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 cup dry white wine, such as Chardonnay, divided use
1 1/4 cups Arborio rice
3 3/4 cups fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth*
2 tablespoons butter
8 ounces mixed gourmet organic mushrooms, sliced
3 tablespoons half and half
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese, optional garnish

Directions:

In a large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook until just soft, but not brown, about 3 minutes. Add 1/4 cup wine and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add rice and stir and cook until it begins to turn translucent, about 2 minutes. Scrape rice and onion mixture into slow-cooker. (Set skillet aside and do not wash.) Turn slow-cooker to high and add broth. Cover and cook on high until tender and moist but not soupy, about 1 3/4 hours to 2 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, using the same skillet, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and butter together over medium heat. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms release their liquid, about 4 minutes. Add remaining 1/4-cup wine and stir and cook another minute or two to allow some of the wine to evaporate. Remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly, then place the mushrooms in a microwave-safe bowl, cover and refrigerate. Just before rice is done, remove mushrooms from refrigerator and microwave, uncovered on high, until heated through, about 2 minutes.

Uncover the risotto and stir in the half and half and salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately, topped with the heated mushrooms and Parmesan, if desired.

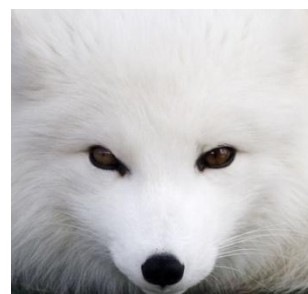
Note: We recommend using certified organic ingredients, when available, in all recipes to maximize flavors and nutrition while minimizing your risk of exposure to pesticides, chemicals and preservatives.

Fun Fact:

Did you know?

That some animals change the color of their fur/feathers for the winter?

The arctic fox, hare, ptarmigan, barren-ground caribou and the ermine all don snow-colored coats for the winter.



Services for 2014:

We offer the following services to help increase the enjoyment and beauty of your property:

Tree / Shrub:

- ❖ Shrub & Tree Spraying / Fertilization Programs
- ❖ Integrated Pest Management
- ❖ Soil Restoration
- ❖ Plant and Soil Stimulation Program
- ❖ Deep Root Feeding
- ❖ Root Growth Enhancement
- ❖ Mature Tree Restoration
- ❖ Air Spading
- ❖ Radial Trenching
- ❖ Vertical Mulching
- ❖ Anti-Desiccant Spraying
- ❖ General Tree and Shrub Maintenance Removal

Turf:

- ❖ Lawn Renovation
- ❖ Fertilization
- ❖ Overseeding
- ❖ Core Aeration
- ❖ Estate / Property Purification

Organic Pest Control:

- ❖ Flying Insect
- ❖ Deer / Geese
- ❖ Rodent Repellent
- ❖ Organic Tick & Flea Control

We also offer Outdoor Holiday Décor.

Call (631) 467-7999 for a free estimate!

