

This easy-to-grow cactus is native to the tropical rainforest of Brazil and requires conditions that are different from desert cacti. It prefers bright light but must be protected from intense midday sunlight. It is thermo-photoperiodic which means that bloom is initiated by a combination of shortening day length and cooler temperatures. Once the day-length decreases to approximately 12 hours, the plant recognizes that is time to bloom. Nighttime temperatures of 55 to 65 degrees should accompany the short day.

Bloom Time: Mid-November – January. Maintain a minimum temperature of 55 degrees and water regularly

Rest Period: February – March. Keep cool and water infrequently.

Normal Period: April – May. Water thoroughly when the soil begins to dry out.

Fertilize: Fertilize during the normal and outdoor periods with a balanced (all three numbers the same), water-soluble fertilizer. Feed 2 – 4 times between April and September.

Outdoors: June – mid-September. Plants can go outdoors if you wish. Place in bright spot out of direct sunlight. Water thoroughly when soil begins to dry out.

Pre-Flowering Period: Mid-September – Mid- November. If you brought it outside, bring it back in. Keep on the dry side and cool until flower buds form, then increase water and temperature.

After bloom: Many people prune back the plant by two or three segments to maintain its shape (better to use your fingers than cut). You can start new plants with the cuttings. Let the cuttings scab over a few days before inserting them in soil.

Repotting: Repotting may be done every year or two to a slightly bigger pot. It is done after bloom time – around March. Potting media can be either a well-drained indoor potting soil or a cactus/succulent mix. Never let your zygo cactus sit in standing water or root rot is likely to occur.

Thanksgiving cactus versus Christmas cactus: There are two main groups of *Schlumbergera*. The *Truncata* group is characterized by pointed teeth on the stem segments, flowers held at the horizontal or above, a flower that is differently shaped at the top than the bottom, and yellow pollen. This group generally blooms earlier and is known as the Thanksgiving cactus. The *Buckleyi* group has rounded and more symmetrical teeth, more symmetrical flowers, flowers which hang down below the horizontal, and pink pollen. This group tends to flower later in the year and is the traditional Christmas cactus.