

CANADA'S GUIDE TO OUTDOOR STYLE

gardening life

2009

GARDEN TRENDS

7 gorgeous
DESIGNER
CONTAINERS
(DIY INCLUDED!)

chic
COUNTRY
DECOR
IDEAS

THE GARDENER'S HOLIDAY ISSUE

exotic festive fare
bloomin' good gifts
all the trimmings
and more!

WINTER 08 \$4.95



DISPLAY UNTIL FEBRUARY 15, 2009

hot plant

TROPICAL CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Flashy poinsettias come and go but Christmas cactuses (*Schlumbergera*) can go on for years, even decades. This exotic creature from Brazil was named for Frederic Schlumberger, a cactus collector in France in the early 1800s. Unlike desert cactuses, Christmas cactus is an epiphyte and lives in the misty treetops of the tropical rainforest. Its arching branches of fleshy leaves (that are actually flattened twigs) erupt at their ends with showy flowers that have been described as leaping shrimps, and technicolour shrimps at that—brilliant pink, peach, magenta, red, and white.



With minimal care, Christmas cactus reblooms spectacularly for many years.



■ cactus care

Jungle cactuses like dappled shade and lots of heat and moisture. But their roots will rot in heavy soil, so pot them in a coarse acidic mix with added grit. Keep the soil moist but not soggy. Cactus expert Paul Brunelle of Dartmouth, N.S., recommends putting the plants outside for

the summer in a shady spot (no direct sunlight). Feed with a high-potassium solution (9-9-26, for example) every two weeks from May to September to promote flowering; and a higher-phosphorus fertilizer (15-30-15) otherwise. Tip: Acidify the soil every few months with one teaspoon of vinegar in one gallon of water.

■ reblooming 101

Christmas cactus sets buds in response to late fall's changes in light and temperature. It needs at least three weeks of long nights or night temperatures around 15°C. These are easily provided if your cactus is outdoors (bring it in before frost). Indoors, keep it in a cool room with strong daylight and uninterrupted dark nights. Once buds form, set the plant in a bright location. Don't move it around too much or the buds may drop. Keep on the dry side until after flowering. Snip off the spent flowers to enhance the display.

NO SLIP, NO SALT

Take a giant—and eco-safe—step toward a salt-free winter by using anti-slip **EcoTraction** on your icy pathways. Offering instant traction, these all-natural volcanic granules from Ottawa's Earth Innovations are kind to plants, pets and paving materials. Spread them in winter and, come spring, sweep them into your garden or lawn where they will provide a slow release of nutrients, help retain water, and aerate the soil. Or save them to reuse next winter. EcoTraction came about after company founder Mark Watson lost his beloved dog, Grover, to cancer. When the disease was possibly linked to ice-melter toxins, Watson set out to find an eco-friendly alternative. He did—and your garden will thank him. earthinnovations.ca

