

HOUSEPLANTS · INDOORS, NEAR A BRIGHT WINDOW AWAY FROM HEATERS

Let's grow Christmas cactus.

Schlumbergera × buckleyi

This plan is for **Schlumbergera × buckleyi**

Is this your plant? Check the flat stem edges: rounded scallops suggest Christmas cactus; pointed teeth suggest Thanksgiving cactus. Shop labels and flowering dates alone do not confirm the type. Use the identity guide below.

Christmas cactus care starts with gentle light, a draining pot, and a moisture check.

Keep its nursery pot

1 rooted plant

Before you start

Start a rooted plant indoors year-round in bright window light, away from heaters; repeat flowering needs a separate fall routine of long, uninterrupted nights.

By [jennyzhuang](#)

Sources checked September 24, 2026 [View sources](#)



LIGHT

Bright, gentle light

Choose filtered window light; protect it from strong afternoon sun.



WATER

Moist, never soggy

Let the surface begin to dry. Do not treat it like a desert cactus.



FEEDING

A light summer feed

Feed monthly in June–August; pause as the fall flower-bud season begins.

BEFORE YOU START



Your little kit.

- ✓ 1 healthy Christmas cactus in a draining 4–6-inch nursery pot
- ✓ A watering can; a ¼-teaspoon measure for summer feeding
- ✓ A saucer or decorative outer pot you can empty

THE SOIL

Keep its free-draining nursery mix initially. When repotting, use an airy houseplant potting mix with perlite; avoid heavy garden soil.

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN



One pot. Here's the plan.

Indoors, near a bright window away from heaters. Start with **nursery plant**.

THE POT

Keep its nursery pot

Our starter plan uses a small plant in a draining 4–6-inch nursery pot. Keep that pot while it works; repot only when needed, after flowering.

HOW MANY

1 rooted plant

Look for rounded, scalloped stem edges. Pointed teeth suggest Thanksgiving cactus; shop labels can be misleading.

THE CONTAINER

Keep its nursery pot



No immediate repot

START WITH

1 rooted plant

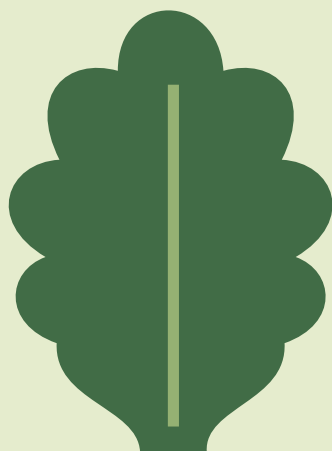


Illustration · not to scale

Keep its nursery pot · 1 rooted plant Our starter plan uses a small plant in a draining 4–6-inch nursery pot. Keep that pot while it works; repot only when needed, after flowering. Look for rounded, scalloped stem edges. Pointed teeth suggest Thanksgiving cactus; shop labels can be misleading. Original illustration; not to scale.

First, check the stem edges.

Christmas



**Rounded
scallops**

Thanksgiving



**Pointed
teeth**

Rounded scallops suggest Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera × buckleyi*); pointed teeth suggest Thanksgiving cactus (*S. truncata*). Hybrids can fall between these shapes. Both are forest cacti; keep them out of fierce sun and prolonged drought. Check the Iowa State identification guide.

Then choose the stage you see.

Buds or flowers now

Keep its position steady. Water as the surface begins drying, with some moisture below. Empty the saucer and skip fertilizer.

Flowers have finished

Expect a slower pace. Let the pot dry more between drinks. Leave a healthy plant in its pot; repot only if roots or drainage need attention.

New summer growth

Use the measured June–August feed below only after nursery nutrients are spent. Check the mix before every watering.

Autumn, no buds yet

Try 14 dark hours, such as 6 pm–8 am, with nights around 60–65°F and bright days for about 6 weeks. Keep lamps off nearby. Stop fertilizer in September.

Our dark-night example is a starting routine, not a bloom-date promise. Some hybrids need longer nights. Identity and flowering conditions; summer feeding and post-bloom watering. The feeding section explains this plan's seasonal pause.

01 Keep the working pot

Remove any sealed gift wrapper around the bottom. Place the draining nursery pot on a saucer; leave a flowering plant in its current pot.

02 Find a steady bright spot

Use filtered daylight, away from a hot radiator or a drafty doorway. Keep the position steady while buds develop.

03 Feel before you water

Check the surface twice a week as a reminder. Water when the surface has started to dry; wait if the mix is still wet.

04 Water, drain, and enjoy

Wet the mix slowly until water comes out underneath. Empty the saucer. Remove spent flowers gently and let the plant keep growing after the holiday.

When it is time to repot: check drainage and choose a container mix. Follow this plant's mix instructions.

Other ways to start

Root a short stem cutting

Take a healthy piece with 2–3 joined segments. Let its cut end dry in shade for 2–3 days, then insert the lower end in a small draining pot of moist perlite or airy potting mix. Keep it in bright indirect light with the medium lightly moist, not soaked. Roots may form in about 2–3 weeks; wait for established growth before feeding.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE



Water & fertilizer at a glance.



WATER WHEN

Check twice weekly. Water as the surface begins drying and the pot feels lighter; drain. Keep some moisture below during buds and flowers. After bloom, allow more drying as growth slows.



FERTILIZER

Jack's Classic All Purpose (US 20-20-20)



AMOUNT

1/4 teaspoon in 1 US gallon of water



WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.



HOW OFTEN TO FEED

Once a month in June, July, and August, at a needed watering.



WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

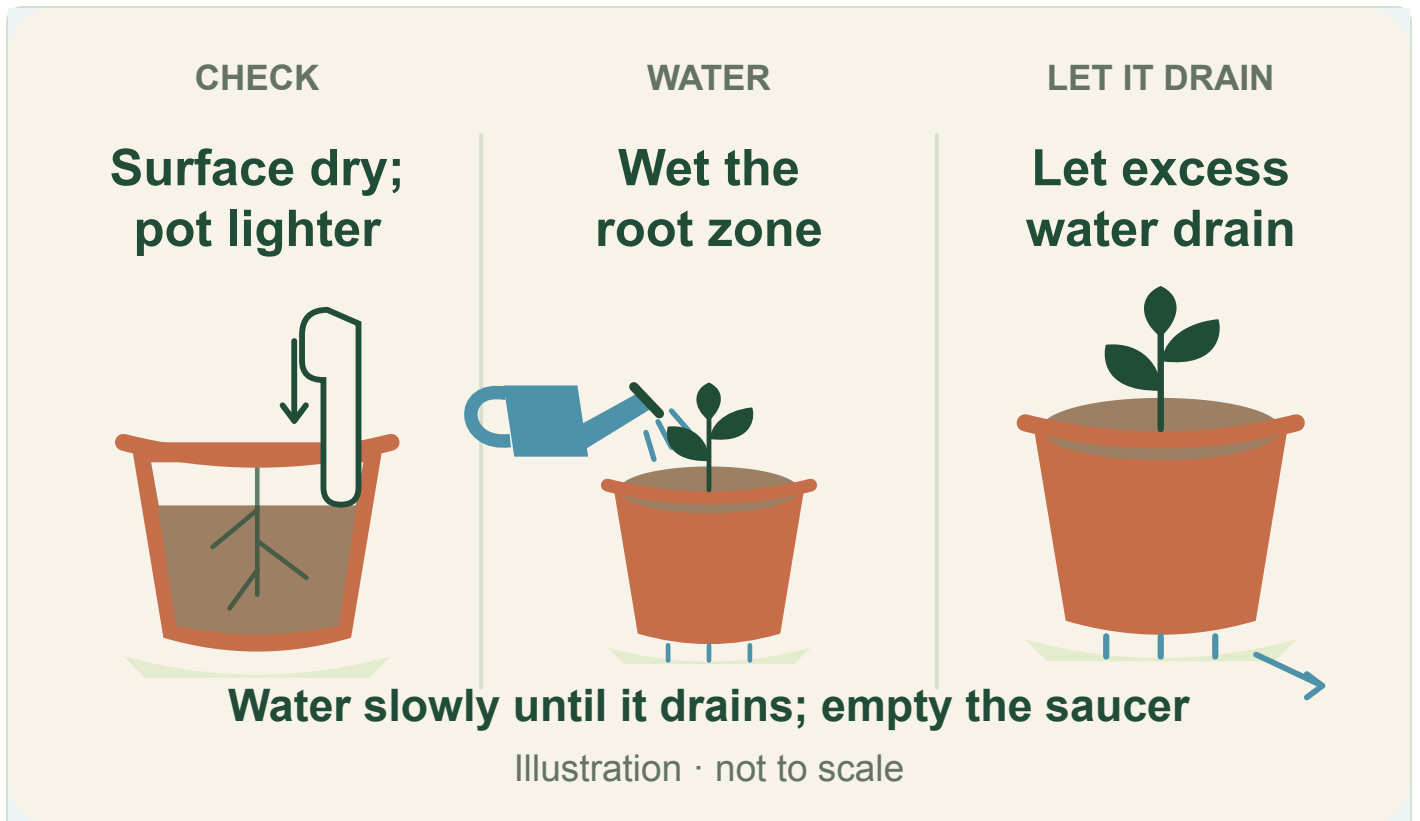
Wait until nursery feed ends. Feed while growing in summer; stop in September and through flowering. Skip damaged roots or a wilted plant in wet mix. Resume when the summer season returns.

Half Jack's periodic indoor concentration; keep this seasonal, dilute recipe.



When to water.

Check twice a week as a reminder; the surface and pot weight decide when to water. When the surface begins to dry and the pot feels lighter, wet the mix and drain. During buds and flowers, keep some moisture below the surface. After bloom, let the pot dry more between drinks as growth slows. A limp plant in wet mix needs a root and drainage check before more water.



Check before watering. Check twice weekly. Water as the surface begins drying and the pot feels lighter; drain. Keep some moisture below during buds and flowers. After bloom, allow more drying as growth slows. Original illustration; not to scale.

The easy rule

Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.



Exactly what to feed it.

Check the nursery label for existing fertilizer before adding any. This simple plan feeds only during active summer growth and stops in September and through flowering. Also skip feeding a wilted plant in wet mix or a plant with damaged roots. Extra fertilizer does not replace the light and temperature signals for buds.

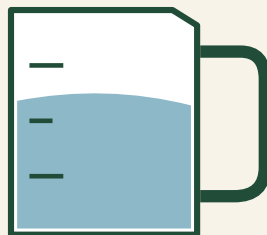
MEASURE

1/4 tsp



DISSOLVE

1 US gal water



USE WHAT IS NEEDED

**Wet the roots;
let excess drain**



Mixing batch ≠ a whole-pot serving

Illustration · not to scale

1/4 teaspoon in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. Once a month in June, July, and August, at a needed watering. Wait until nursery feed ends. Feed while growing in summer; stop in September and through flowering. Skip damaged roots or a wilted plant in wet mix. Resume when the summer season returns. Original illustration; not to scale.

US PRODUCT REFERENCE



Jack's Classic

All Purpose

20-20-20

Soluble: mix into water

[Check the official US product ↗](#)

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

¼ TEASPOON PER US GALLON · MONTHLY IN SUMMER

Jack's Classic All Purpose 20-20-20 (US)

Mix ¼ teaspoon of Jack's Classic All Purpose 20-20-20 into 1 US gallon of water. At a needed watering, apply enough to wet this pot and drain; do not pour on the whole gallon. Repeat monthly in June, July, and August only while growing and after existing feed ends. This is half Jack's periodic indoor concentration, paired with Minnesota Extension's summer schedule. Our beginner plan follows Clemson's September-to-bloom pause and resumes the following summer; it does not add a separate bloom booster.

[Check the manufacturer's product page ↗](#)

Use the named US formulation. A different product or concentration needs different directions. The amount mixed is a batch, not a dose to pour into one pot.

03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Seasonal buds and flowers

A healthy nursery plant can stay with you for many years. Buds and flowers follow seasonal light and temperature signals; they do not have to arrive on Christmas Day.

Fall nights for repeat bloom

Start with a rooted plant indoors any time. To encourage fall buds, try 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness each night, such as 6 pm–8 am, with nights around 60–65°F and bright indirect light by day. Keep this routine for about 6 weeks. Iowa State notes that many cultivars need 14–16 dark hours; response varies, so Christmas Day bloom is not guaranteed. Avoid evening lamps, cold drafts, and frost.

For regional planting windows, [find your local Cooperative Extension office](#) ↗.

Something looking off?

Is mine actually a Thanksgiving cactus?

Compare the stem edges in the identification diagram above. Many plants sold for Christmas are Thanksgiving cactus or hybrids. Basic care is similar, but a November bloom is not a failure, and a shop name does not guarantee a December bloom.

Why is it dropping flower buds?

A move, dry roots, waterlogged mix, or sudden changes in temperature can upset a budding plant. Check the mix and keep conditions steady. Do not respond with a stronger fertilizer dose.

Why does it stay green but never flower?

Check for evening lamps and a warm nighttime location. Try the cool, uninterrupted dark-night routine above while keeping bright daytime light. Check root health too. Increasing fertilizer cannot make up for unsuitable night conditions.

Choosing forest-cactus care and rooting cuttings

Use forest-cactus conditions, not desert care

Its ancestors grow in forest habitats. Filtered light, airy roots, and moderate moisture suit it better than fierce sun and prolonged drought.

Root a joined stem in a separate pot

Use a short joined stem, not seed, for a practical home start. Keep the little cutting separately until it roots so its moist rooting mix does not change the watering needs of the parent pot.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- [Iowa State: holiday-cactus identity and dark-night requirements ↗](https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/all-about-holiday-cacti)
<https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/all-about-holiday-cacti>
- [University of Minnesota: half-strength summer feeding and flower-bud conditions ↗](https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/holiday-cacti)
<https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/holiday-cacti>
- [Wisconsin Extension: cactus identity, drainage, and stem cuttings ↗](https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/holiday-cactus/)
<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/holiday-cactus/>
- [Clemson Extension: rainforest cactus care and September feeding pause ↗](https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/indoor-cacti/)
<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/indoor-cacti/>
- [Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗](https://www.jrpeters.com/post/how-often-do-i-feed-my-plants)
<https://www.jrpeters.com/post/how-often-do-i-feed-my-plants>

Something needs updating? [Suggest a correction](#)

Published September 23, 2026 · Updated September 24, 2026

Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.