



Cacti

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Cacti occur in a wide range of shapes and sizes and are well-known for their sculptural forms and beautiful, often formidable spines. Some cactus also features flowers, which although short lived, are very beautiful and appearing.

Many have evolved to survive harsh, dry environments, which makes them well-suited for containers and pots, but will also thrive in garden beds, with minimal water and maintenance requirements. Cacti species can withstand considerable neglect, but will grow better, flower more profusely & live longer if the following is observed.

Lots of Sunlight

Cacti love bright light. A cactus that's enjoying ideal light will look normal and are more likely to flower. Not all cacti tolerate direct sunlight. If cacti appear off colour or bleached it may be getting too much light or not enough. These signs can also indicate disease or too much water, so some judgement is needed.

While it's normal for a cactus to slowly grow toward light, if the cactus is bent toward the light, it may need to be moved to a brighter spot. Make the move gradually, to give your plant time to transition from the indoors to the outdoors to avoid scorching.

Plants on windowsills will grow & flower more symmetrically if rotated regularly and remember, all indoor cacti benefit from a min holiday outdoors.

Watering

Whether cacti are kept indoors or out, as a general rule let the soil dry out completely before watering it again. When watering, give the soil a good soaking, and then allow to almost dry out. This will depend on, type, aspect, soil and sunlight.

Cacti can tolerance extreme drought, which has lead many to believe that cacti don't need a lot of water. While it's true they're tough, most cacti won't thrive without water.

That said, overwatering is where many go wrong. Too much water encourages fungus which rot the roots and base of the plant. Once fungus has taken hold, they can't be saved.

POTTING MIX AND POTS REPOTTING

Cacti soil must be well-draining. Always use a special cactus potting mix or mix your own, mix of coarse sand, crushed sandstone, fine gravel and compost or coir peat.

Terracotta pots are idea for cacti as they allow the soil to dry out faster, however cacti will grow in most pots, so take your pick. Whatever you choose, make sure the pot has good drainage. When it comes to repotting, this is a picky job, handy tools can include newspaper, paper towels or bubble wrap.

Astrophytum

Commonly recognised for the species known as 'Bishop's Cap', Astrophytum is a slow-growing cactus with pink, white or yellow flowers protruding from the apex of the plant during spring-summer.

Cleistocactus

The 'Silver Torch' cactus (also known as 'Woolly Torch'), or Cleistocactus strausii, is a clumping, frost-tolerant cactus of grey/white columns, which usually grow to approximately 1.5m in a domestic environment. Red flowers protrude horizontally from the mature columns during summer.

Mammilloidia candida is a globose cactus with short, white spines and woolly appearance, commonly and will need protection from frost. Typically planted into hanging baskets, this trailing cactus can form



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Echinocactus

The popularly known 'Golden Barrel', or *Echinocactus grusonii*, is a hardy, globose cactus which may clump or remain solitary. Yellow flowers form around the crown of mature plants during summer.

Echinopsis (Syn. *Lobivia*, *Trichocereus*)

E. subdenudata – A clumping, small-spined species which will usually reach approximately 10cm in height. Very large white blooms on long tubes appear through spring-summer.

E. scopulicola – A powdery blue-green columnar species with very small spines. Mature plants form large white flowers in summer.

Espostoa

The 'Peruvian Old Man Cactus', or *Espostoa melanostele*, is a tall (typically less than 2m), clumping species with woolly, white columns. This plant will tolerate a full sun position.

Ferocactus

Ferocactus, also known as the 'Fishhook Cactus' or 'Barrel Cactus', have thick, hooked spines. This cactus will tolerate a sunny to partly shaded position and is tolerant of frost.

Gymnocalycium

G. baldianum – The 'Chin Cactus' is a small, flat-globose cactus with short stemmed flowers forming on the crown. Flowers can be magenta, pink, red, orange or white and form in early summer.

G. mihanovichii – Popularly used as brightly coloured cacti (yellow, orange, pink, red or purple) that are grafted onto another plant. This species prefers a warm position, with protection from the full hot sun. Flowers appear in summer.

Hatiora (Syn. *Rhipsalidopsis*)

Hatiora and related hybrids are commonly known as the 'Easter Cactus' or 'Spring Cactus' as they typically form star-like flowers in spring. They are suitable for hanging baskets and thrive in a bright position.

Mammillaria

Mammillaria is one of the largest genera in the cactus family. An attractive quality of this genus is the ring of petite flowers which form around the crown in most species. Listed below are some of the more commonly found *Mammillaria*:



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M. bocasana

A small, clustering, woolly species known as the 'Powder Puff', 'Pincushion' or 'Snowball Cactus'. Flowers range from cream to pink.

M. celsiana

The 'Golden Pincushion' is a globose cactus with gold radial spines and woolly fibres. It requires a well-lit position and protection from frost. Rings of small carmine flowers form in spring.

M. elongata

The 'Lady Finger Cactus' is a small (usually 15cm or less) species with elongated stems, which requires a sunny or partly shaded position. Spring flowers are cream to yellow.

M. elongata cristata

Often referred to as the 'Brain Cactus' because of its brain-like appearance. It requires a sunny to partly shaded position. The undulating, wavy crests eventually grow into a mass around 15cm.

M. gracilis fragilis

The 'Arizona Snowcap' is a dense, branching species covered with white radial spines. It prefers a well-lit position and protection from frost. Cream coloured flowers can form for most of the year but are most common in late summer to early autumn.

M. haageana elegans

Usually solitary but clustering with age, this cactus forms dark pink flowers in spring and tolerates sun or shade.

M. hahniana

The woolly 'Old Lady Cactus' grows around 10cm tall, with a solitary, globose, slightly squat habit. It prefers a warm, sunny position to part shade and forms a ring of dark pink flowers.

M. marksiana

A flattened globose species with bright yellow flowers in late winter and spring. It prefers a sunny or partly shaded position.

M. matudae

A cylindrical species known as the 'Thumb Cactus' which forms clusters with age, usually around 10cm in height. It prefers a sunny to partly shaded position and protection from frost. Dark pink flowers form in late spring to early summer.

M. spinosissima

Commonly available in the cultivar 'Pico', this ovate species features distinctively long, white, delicate spines. It typically reaches around 15cm in height and produces dark pink flowers in spring.



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M. zeilmanniana

The 'Rose Pincushion' usually reaches a height of around 15cm and prefers a sunny position, however protection from the hot afternoon sun is ideal, as well as protection from frost. Young plants are solitary but will clump with age. Pink flowers form in summer.

Mammilloidia

Mammilloidia candida is a globose cactus with short, white spines and woolly appearance, commonly named 'Snowball Cactus'. Flowers are pink or pinkish-white and form around late winter and well into spring.

Myrtillocactus

Myrtillocactus geometrizans is a blue, branching, columnar cactus known as the 'Blue Torch' which can grow up to 4.5m in nature. This plant can burn in the full sun when young, but will tolerate sun later into maturity.

Oreocereus

Oreocereus celsianus, commonly named 'Old Man of the Andes' or 'Old Man of the Mountain', is a columnar cactus with distinctively long, silky white hairs. It will grow in a sunny to partly shaded position.

Parodia (Syn. *Notocactus*, *Eriocactus*)

P. leninghausii – The 'Golden Torch' is a columnar cactus with delicate golden spines. It grows to approximately 1m tall and is tolerant of heat and frost. Yellow flowers are produced in spring to late summer.

P. magnifica

The 'Balloon Cactus' (sometimes known as the 'Ball Cactus') requires a sunny to partly shaded position and protection from frost. Yellow flowers form near the apex at any time of the year but mostly through summer.

Pilocereus

Pilocereus azureus is a blue, columnar cactus with yellow spines commonly named the 'Blue Torch'. This plant prefers a warm, sunny position or partial shade and will need protection from frost. White flowers appear in summer on mature specimens.

Rebutia (Syn. *Sulcorebutia*)

R. albiflora – A small, profusely clumping cactus covered with delicate, white, hair-like spines. Flower buds are pink which open into white flowers in spring. This species will need protection from the hot summer sun.

R. fabrisii

A compact, heavily clumping cactus with red flowers forming in spring. This species prefers a well-lit position.



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R. fabrisii v. aureiflora

A compact, heavily clumping cactus which forms a mound up to 15cm tall. It requires a sunny to partial shade position, however it will need protection from the hot summer sun. Yellow flowers appear in spring.

R. pulvinosa

A compact, heavily clumping cactus with bright orange flowers which form in spring. This plant grows best in part shade.

R. heliosa var cajasensis

A clumping cactus which prefers a well-lit position but will also tolerate light shade. Red flowers form profusely in spring

Rhipsalis

R. baccifera – Commonly known as the 'Mistletoe Cactus', this species does best in full to part-shade and will need protection from frost. Typically planted into hanging baskets, this trailing cactus can form slender stems up to 1.8m long.

R. houletiana

Typically planted into hanging baskets, this trailing cactus forms thin, wide stems up to 1.8m long and does best in part to full shade. Pale yellow or white flowers form in spring to early summer.

R. paradoxa

The 'Chain Cactus' is a trailing species suited to hanging baskets in a shade or part shade situation. Small, white flowers bloom in late winter to early spring.

R. pilocarpa

olerating sun to partial shade, this trailing cactus is suited to hanging baskets. It features a covering of soft, white hairs. White flowers form at the tips of the stems in autumn to early winter.

R. teres syn. capilliformis

This trailing species requires full to light shade and is suited to hanging baskets. White flowers form at the tips in late summer, autumn and winter.

Schlumbergera (Syn. Zygocactus, Epiphyllum)

Known commonly as the 'Christmas Cactus', 'Thanksgiving Cactus', 'Holiday Cactus' or 'Crab Cactus', Schlumbergera prefer a lightly shaded but warm position and are suited to hanging baskets. Spectacular flowers in a range of colours form at the tips of the thick, flat stems in the cooler months (note that the common names were coined in the northern hemisphere).

Stenocactus syn. Echinofossulocactus

Stenocactus multicostatus is a small (usually 15cm or less), usually solitary, globose cactus with multiple thin, wavy ribs and flattened spines. Flowers are white or pink and form in spring and summer. **Stenocereus Stenocereus pruinosus** is a blue-grey columnar cactus known as the 'Grey Organ Pipe' or 'Grey Ghost Organ Pipe'. This species will accept full sun once acclimatised and will need protection from frost.