

## The Grapevine

### Blooming Holiday Cacti

The holiday cacti are coming!!! It's almost time for the Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus to start appearing in stores but many of you might have saved yours from the year before. Holiday cacti are relatively easy to help rebloom every year and will often bloom twice a year if conditions are right. It's time to provide your holiday cacti with a couple conditions to get beautiful blooms this winter.

Holiday cacti are short day plants and require long nights in order to bloom. Similar to a poinsettia provide them with 13 hours of darkness over 6-8 weeks in order to get blooms to initiate. If you want your holiday cacti to bloom for Thanksgiving or Christmas we are in the window to start providing those hours of darkness to encourage blooms. Unlike poinsettias, there is another way to get holiday cacti to bloom. If holiday cacti have 6-8 weeks of cool night temperatures (50-60 degrees F) that will also encourage our cacti to initiate bloom buds. A cool garage, outside on a covered porch (be sure the temperatures don't get too cold) or a basement can provide the needed temperatures to encourage bloom buds.

Once you have bloom buds initiated be careful not to "shock" your plants as cool drafts, getting too dry or too little humidity can cause the plant to drop their buds. The buds will last longer if kept in cooler temperatures; however, they will still provide a beautiful display under most home conditions.

These beautiful tropical cacti can be kept for decades, I have one in my home that is well over 100 years old right now, and provide a beautiful bloom display year after year. Once they are done blooming, treat them like a houseplant with bright indirect light and water when the top few inches of the soil dry out. Once our temperatures warm up in the spring, move the plants outside in an area that gets partial sun (3-6 hours of sunlight) and fertilize on a regular basis.



### Succulent pumpkin displays

Every fall as I scroll through Facebook or Pinterest I always find beautiful pictures of succulent pumpkins to use as centerpieces or just for decoration. These beautiful displays are fairly simple and inexpensive to make, often you already have the supplies at home already. All you need are a pumpkin, hot glue gun, moss and succulent cuttings. Here are some instructions on how to make a beautiful display this fall:

- The first step is to find a pumpkin or winter squash with a flat top. The "princess" varieties or smaller varieties similar to the picture work well. The flat tops help keep the succulents in place.
- Once you have your pumpkin use the hot glue or a spray adhesive to attach the moss to the top of the pumpkin. (It is easier to work in smaller sections so the glue doesn't cool before you can get your moss attached.)
- The next step is my favorite. Now you will glue your cuttings to your moss. Try to use taller cuttings in the middle to create a mounded look. Gradually use shorter cuttings as you move away from the stem. String of pearls or burro's tail cuttings work great around the very edge to trail over your pumpkin. (Note: the cuttings will not be harmed by the hot glue and will slowly start to root through it.)



Since we didn't cut into the pumpkin it should last a long time. Place your pumpkin in a bright lit area to keep the succulents growing and happy. You can spray the moss and succulents as they start to look dry, approximately once a week, to keep them happy. Once the pumpkin starts to go bad it is easy to pull the succulents off of it and plant them in succulent soil to start new plants for the future. These beautiful pumpkin displays make wonderful centerpieces for fall events, Thanksgiving tables or on your dining room table. Happy Growing!!

### Issue of the Week-

This week's issue of the week is the overwatering of houseplants. As houseplants get brought inside for the winter it's very easy to over love our plants. When they were outside plants needed far more water than they do inside simply because of warmer temperatures, wind, more light, etc. Once plants get moved inside it can be very easy to over water them simply because we have been in the habit of watering them more than they will need. It's also important to remember that many plants go into a semi dormant or even dormant period during the winter, even if under grow lights, and their care needs are going to change drastically. As the fall and winter progresses, be sure to monitor the soil moisture of your plants before you water. It gets very easy to simply get into a routine of watering on a specific day once a week or every other week which may not be what your plant really needs especially as we transition from running the air conditioner to running the furnace over time. Watering needs are also going to change throughout the winter simply because of the humidity levels in your house. Plants will dry out faster when there are lower levels of humidity so once the furnace comes on for the year you will have to adjust your watering again. If possible run humidifiers, both for your health and your plants, during the winter to combat the drying effect of the furnace on the air. Right now our humidity levels are extremely low due to drought conditions. Hopefully some rain early this week will help to combat that issue but it might not last.



### Reminders-

- Drain hoses and remove from hydrants for the next couple days.
- Wait to cut frost killed perennials, unless diseases were present, till spring to provide a home for beneficial insects overwinter.
- Once you are done with tools for the fall be sure to clean them and store properly so they are ready to use in the spring.
- Soil test your garden or flower bed spots.

### Upcoming Events

- **November 2, 2022: Wildlife Damage Prevention and Control in the Lawn and Garden**  
Have your prized vegetables and beautiful landscapes ever become an all-you-can-eat buffet for local wildlife? Learn how to identify the squirrels, rabbits, deer, gophers, or other wildlife that may be causing problems, and better understand how to prevent their damage. Join Dr. Ricketts, as he shares practical tips to prevent and control common wildlife damage issues. For more information or to register [click here](#).
- **December 7, 2022: Accessible Gardening for All**  
Gardening is a passion for so many people, however due to physical challenges, many people find themselves limited or unable to garden. Join Calla Edwards, Butler County Horticulture Extension Agent to learn tips, tricks, and ways to make your gardening experience adaptable for everyone. For more information or to register [click here](#).