GROWING THE CHRISTMAS CACTUS

LIGHT
The Christmas cactus requires direct sunlight. However, during the summer when light intensity is high, this plant needs protection from the midday sun which can burn the stems. Thus, during summer move the plant a few feet from the window, close sheer curtains, partially close venetian blinds, place the plant in a window which receives indirect light or outside where it receives morning sun and afternoon shade.

WATER
The Christmas cactus should be watered when the top inch of soil in the container feels decidedly dry to the touch. Then, soak the soil thoroughly, until water comes through the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. Wait 15 minutes and discard the excess water which has accumulated in the drip plate beneath the container.

HUMIDITY
The Christmas cactus grows best when humidity is high. The best way to increase humidity is to place the pot, with its drip plate, on a tray filled with small pebbles. The water will evaporate from the tray and humidify the air around the plant.

FERTILIZER
Fertilize the plant with a water soluble fertilizer recommended for flowering house plants. Apply fertilizer every month at full strength or every 2 weeks at half strength as suggested on the label. Reduce the frequency of fertilization from autumn until after the plants have flowered and new growth has begun.

(Please see other side for more information)
FLOWERING
Both temperature and day length effect the flowering of Christmas cactus. Flower buds will form under the following conditions.

1) If the night temperature is maintained at 50 to 55 degrees F., buds will be produced regardless of day length.

2) If the temperature is between 55 and 70, 13 hours of uninterrupted darkness will result in bud formation.

3) If the temperature is between 70 and 75, 15 hours of uninterrupted darkness will result in bud formation. However, buds produced under warmer temperatures may drop before opening, thus, the first 2 conditions are preferred.

Uninterrupted darkness means NO light during the dark period. This includes light from lamps inside the home and from street lamps outdoors.

To provide the dark periods described under conditions 2 and 3, plants can be covered with black cloth or placed in a light-tight closet during the night. (Realize that if the temperature inside the closet is in the 70 to 75 degree range, 15 hours of darkness is required, as described under condition 3.)

Plants must be given darkness each night until buds are produced, approximately 6 to 9 weeks. (Remember, if plants are grown in a cool location, 50 to 55 degrees, they do not require a dark period.)

A common and grave mistake is to leave plants in the dark 24 hours a day. The Christmas cactus requires direct light every day following the dark period.

PREVENTING PREMATURE FLOWER BUD DROP
Flower buds dropping before they open is a complaint commonly heard from those growing Christmas cactus. To prevent bud drop, avoid drafts and rapid fluctuation in temperature after buds have been set; water correctly, as described above; keep humidity high; and avoid moving the plant from one place to another once color is visible in the buds.