

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 48

Easter Cactus

Description

The Easter cactus (*Rhipsalidopsis gaetneri*) originates in Brazil and is a close relative of the Christmas and Thanksgiving cacti. The Easter cactus is known as a symbol of spring.

The plant body is flattened, and the leaves are the stems themselves. The Easter cactus produces fuchsia-like flowers that are pink and have a rosy smell. The flowers are long lasting, and many hybrids include white, yellow, red, and purple varieties. The plant can grow up to 30 cm tall and can also produce berries.

When selecting an Easter cactus, be sure to look for a plant with healthy foliage and bright, clear-coloured flowers.

Flowering Period and Light

The Easter cactus blooms in early spring. The plant starts to produce buds in early February and flowers in late March. It continues to flower right through to May.

The Easter cactus needs to be kept indoors in a sunny, south-facing window from mid September to May. From May to September, while outdoors, the cactus is best in the shade. Keep in mind to gradually harden off the plant.

With prolonged exposure to light, the flower colour fades.

Temperature and Moisture

During the pre-flowering period, keep the Easter cactus cool and dry until the flower buds are visible. Increase temperature once the flowers begin to bloom. During the

flowering period, water it whenever the surface of the soil feels dry. A surrounding temperature of 16 to 22° C. must be maintained. During the resting period, when the plant is no longer flowering, keep the plant in a location with a surrounding temperature of approximately 12° C., in a slightly moist soil. Be careful not to over water.

Soil and Fertilizer

For optimal growth, plant the Easter cactus in a good potting mix. Fertilize the plant monthly using a water-soluble or liquid fertilizer. Avoid feeding during flowering periods.

Pests and Disease

When looking for signs of pests and diseases, check under the leaves of the Easter cactus. This plant is known for having pests such as mealybugs and scale insects. Not only do pests and diseases affect the plant, but they can also spread to surrounding plants. If pests are found, wash the Easter cactus with soapy water. When pests are too severe, discard the plant.

Longevity

The Easter cactus is long lived and easy to grow, and can be passed down from generation to generation. Happy Easter.

Colby Chin, Class of 2004

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery

Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus, 135 Taylor Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0
phone: (905) 641-2252, ext. 4082; fax: (905) 988-4307 e-mail: mnewell@niagaracollege.ca
Website: <http://greenhousenursery.niagaracollege.ca>