

# Wallsend Nurseries

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## Growing Cacti

Probably one of the greatest fascinations people hold with Cacti is their ability to produce spectacular flower displays. This combined with the infinite variety of shapes & colours makes them ideal plants to collect & display.

Cacti have evolved to be the ideal plant to survive in very harsh environments where there is little water available for most of the year. This often makes them an ideal subject for indoor culture!

Cacti have the ability to store water in their tissues so that they can survive long hot periods with little deterioration. This fact does not necessarily mean require no watering at all, on the contrary. To be successful with cacti you really should establish a regular watering pattern.

Water is the essential ingredient for the survival of any plant & this includes Cacti. When watering you should give the plants a thorough soaking then allow a period of time for the soil to dry out once again.

We water our cacti about twice per month in Summer & far less during Winter. Probably once per month is OK during Winter as the plants will have a tendency to rot if they are wet & cold at this time of the year. If in doubt it's always best **NOT TO WATER**.

Light is a very important consideration when growing Cacti. Since they are after all desert plants they will require very high light for the best results. Even direct sunlight is quite acceptable as long as the plants have been hardened up to withstand it. Indeed, the more sun available, the better the shape, colour & formation of the plant as well as its resistance to disease & attack by pests. Spines have evolved not just to protect the plants from animals but also to protect them from sunburn. In fact, the more sunlight the plant is subjected to, the more spiny & hairy it often becomes. Cacti will not flower well without sunlight and it is always a good idea to rotate the plant at least weekly so that all sides receive the same amount of light. This is also done to even up the flower display as the plant won't flower on the shady side.

Soil mix for Cacti must be well drained. We stock Debco brand cacti mix & have good results with it.

Re-potting is a simple process & can be done at any time of the year, the Winter period being the best, as after re-potting the plant it must not be watered for a week to allow root damage done to heal. Watering during this first week can often lead to root rot. Use a glove & carefully remove the plant from its old pot. It's a good idea to be gentle with the taller species as they can be quite brittle. Simply tease the roots out a little, place the plant into its new pot ensuring it will be at the same level as it was before repotting so as no soil is built up around the base of the plant. Pour some more soil to fill the pot & firm down well. Many people like to add some decorative gravel or perhaps some crushed tile to the soil surface for interest.

Cacti will survive in small pots for extremely long periods, but as a living plant it does require nourishment & after one year in the same pot, it will require some fertilizer. A regular feeding program is best established depending on how fast growing the plant is.

Liquid fertilizer applied at the watering intervals can be used or a slow release fertilizer such as Garden Gold® is acceptable.

Cacti have few pests & diseases. Root rot is the largest killer of Cacti & is aggravated by overwatering. That makes control simple....**DON'T OVERWATER!** Infected plants may respond to Fongarid® treatment but only if the disease is seen early enough.

Mealy bug & scale are the two main pests. Both may be treated with White oil or Confidor® or a mixture of the two. Spray as soon as the pests are seen as they do lots of damage & can ruin the appearance of a nice specimen quickly.