

Holiday Plants as Gifts that Last

Christmas Cactus

Christmas Cactus is one of the longest-lived plants and can survive for decades! Christmas Cactus needs 12 to 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness starting in September to form flowers. Keep it in a room where there's no nighttime light (not even streetlights) to interrupt its day/night cycle. It's generally less fussy than other short-day plants and typically will rebloom without much coaxing. To help it along, feed it with half-strength plant food monthly during its active growing season from later winter to early spring

Amaryllis

It's worth a try to save your amaryllis bulb after blooming because it's not as picky as other Christmas plants. After you remove the spent flower, leave the stalk and foliage in place. Keep it indoors in a sunny window until all danger of frost has passed. Then place it outdoors in a sunny spot, and water during dry spells. By July 4th, bring it back indoors, and place in a dark, dry spot until Halloween (no watering!). Then, cut off the dead foliage, place the plant in a bright window, water it once, and don't water it again until greenery appears. You'll likely bloom in a month or so.

Rosemary

You'll often see fragrant Rosemary plants sheared into topiary or Christmas tree shapes for the holidays. Give Rosemary bright light in an east, west or south-facing window otherwise, they'll drop foliage constantly. Water when the top of the soil feels dry. Move it to the outside garden at any time in Southern California.

Lemon Cypress

The citrus-y scented lemon-colored needles make this a favorite holiday conifer. Most of the ones sold as houseplants at Christmas are dwarf varieties that don't get larger than three feet. Give the plant loads of bright light indoors in the winter, and keep slightly moist (or in Southern California leave it outside during the winter as you would a perennial)