FOOD & PLANTS

Is a Christmas Cactus Toxic to Cats? A Safe Holiday Plant

No. The ASPCA lists the Christmas cactus as non-toxic to cats, one of the safer holiday plants to keep. Store labels often mix up holiday cacti, so check the name, and keep lilies and other plants of the season out of reach.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed November 1, 2026 • 5 min read • 7 cited sources

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The short answer

No. The ASPCA lists the Christmas cactus (Schlumbergera bridgesii), which it also calls Easter cactus, as non-toxic to cats, dogs and horses. It is one of the safer holiday plants to keep with a cat.

One catch: holiday cacti are often mislabeled in stores (NC State Extension), so the plant on your sill may be a close relative. See which holiday cactus you have, below.

Non-toxic means not poisonous, not cat food. A cat that eats a lot of any plant can vomit, and the fertilizer and the other plants of the season carry their own risks.

Which holiday cactus you have

Three cactus-like plants bloom around the holidays. N.C. Cooperative Extension tells them apart by their flat stem segments and when they bloom:

- Thanksgiving cactus (Schlumbergera truncata): blooms in late November. Its segments have pointed edges, like small hooks or claws.
- Christmas cactus (Schlumbergera bridgesii): blooms in December. Its segments have smooth edges with slight scalloping.

- Easter cactus (Hatiora gaertneri, in NC State's naming): blooms in spring. Its segments are oval, with soft, rounded edges and no sharp points.

Is a Thanksgiving cactus safe for cats?

The ASPCA's list names the Christmas cactus (Schlumbergera bridgesii) and the shrimp cactus (Schlumbergera russelliana) as non-toxic. It has no entry for the Thanksgiving cactus, Schlumbergera truncata, a close relative in the same genus.

Without a listing, the careful course is to treat it like any plant you can't look up: keep it where your cat can't chew it, and call your vet if your cat eats some and seems unwell.

Names cross over here too. The ASPCA uses "Easter cactus" as another name for its Christmas cactus, while NC State uses it for Hatiora gaertneri, a different spring-blooming plant. Go by the scientific name on the tag.

Holiday plants to watch

The Christmas cactus is the easy one. Other plants of the season need more care. On the ASPCA's list:

- True lilies (Lilium), common in holiday bouquets: an emergency. Every part, even pollen and vase water, can cause kidney failure (FDA). See **are lilies toxic to cats**.
- Amaryllis: toxic.
- Holly (Ilex opaca) and American mistletoe (Phoradendron flavescens): toxic.
- Kalanchoe: toxic.
- The **poinsettia**: toxic but mild. Its sap irritates the mouth and stomach, and the ASPCA calls it generally overrated in toxicity.
- Pencil cactus (Euphorbia tirucalli): toxic, despite the name. It is a spurge, like the poinsettia, not a true cactus.

Keeping a Christmas cactus with a cat

- Set it where your cat can't knock the pot over or dig in the soil.
- Pick up fallen flowers and segments if your cat likes to bat them around.
- Read the label before you feed it. Pet Poison Helpline says a small taste of fertilizer usually causes a mild upset stomach, but larger amounts can poison a pet, and some products also contain herbicides, pesticides or fungicides.

- Check gift plants and arrangements for lilies or other holiday plants tucked in beside it.
- Give your cat other things to do while the decorations are up: see **indoor cat enrichment**.

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: If your cat ate some, Other cacti and succulents, Cat-safe plants to grow instead and 1 more section, plus the Toxic & Safe Houseplants for Cats Chart. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/is-christmas-cactus-toxic-to-cats

Sources

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