



garden spot

Stick to points on caring for cactus



MARTY FIGLEY

Q. At Christmas time I received a small cactus and I want to care for it properly. It is about five inches tall with a triangular shaped stem (some spines) with a bright red spiny bloom on top. Any sugges-

tions?

A. I looked in several books and cannot positively identify your cactus. It may be an Echinocereus variety, but the cacti (Cactaceae) family is very large. Elvin McDonald, in his book "The New Houseplant," says Echinocereus "are among the easiest of all cacti to bring into flower. Popular names include hedgehog and rainbow cactus."

Your cactus probably came in a very small container in soil that was hard. If you haven't repotted it by now, here's

what to do:

Put it in the sink, wash off all the soil and replant it in barely moist cactus soil (a loam-based soil) in a slightly larger pot. Although the upper part of the plant looks very sturdy, care should be taken not to damage the delicate and tender root system. To protect your hands, use heavy gloves or wrap the plant in a cloth.

Let the roots re-establish themselves and, after a few weeks, begin a regular watering system: Water well, within an hour pour off the water remaining in the saucer. Water again when the surface feels dry, but don't wait until it is bone dry. Keep the soil evenly moist in spring and summer, and slightly on the dry side the rest of the year. Shower it occasionally to remove dust.

A sunny south window is the best spot for cacti, but an east or west window is OK. Fluorescent light is fine, too. Average house temperatures will do. Feed with an all-purpose plant food according to package directions when

natural light is lower, usually in the fall and winter months.

Cacti grow all over North and South America, from the Arctic Circle to Patagonia (the southernmost region of Argentina). If any readers can positively identify this cactus, please let me know.

New flowers

Last week I shared information about new flowers to look for this year, but space prohibited me from including All-America Selections.

These six plants have "proved to have superior home garden qualities when grown in side-by-side comparison tests with the closest varieties on the market in North America and the most similar variety in the world," AAS said.

Zinnia angustifolia, "Crystal White," with daisy-like blooms, begins flowering in May and continues until frost. This bedding-plant winner is easy-care, needing no pinching or pruning; only



Photo by Marty Figley

Sticky subject: Do you know what kind of cactus this is?

See Figley, page G10

KITCHEN and BATH ideas

Presented by Carl J. Crespi & Mark Fronoff

CONTEMPORARY IDEAS

If there is a guiding principle behind contemporary design, it is "form follows function". A strict interpretation of this dictum has led many to design kitchens with large doses of stainless steel on everything from refrigerator doors to restaurant-style appliances to counter tops. In keeping with the minimalist look of contemporary design, clutter is kept under control with the selection of predominantly closed-door storage. If there is any open storage, it is reserved for books or displays of treasured objects. To add a bit of drama to the understated look, narrow, C-shaped, elongated handles may be selected to play off against the clean lines of plain contemporary cabinets. To carry the sleek look even further, magnetic touch latches can be used in place of handles to open doors with a gentle push.

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