



J&L Garden Center

*The All Season Gift
and Garden Center*

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Poinsettias

Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous plants. The milky sap is usually harmless but in rare cases it may irritate someone's skin. Fortunately the sap doesn't taste good because it may irritate the stomach, but it will not poison anyone. Even though poinsettias are easy to grow they are not "foolproof". Many people have problems with them dropping their leaves prematurely or losing their bracts. The length of blooming time depends on how well you take care of your plant when you first buy it.

Poinsettias are easy to grow and can add a wide variety of color to your home. Poinsettias are available with white, pink, red, yellow, speckled, and even multi-colored bracts. More poinsettias are commercially grown in the world than any other houseplant or flower. Two-thirds of all poinsettias grown in the world are sold in the United States. Almost everyone in the United States buys one or two poinsettia plants every year, many people buy even more.



Blooming Time

All blooming plants need a considerable amount of light to keep their blossoms healthy. Poinsettias also need plenty of light to keep them looking their best. Your poinsettias were grown in a greenhouse where they had ideal growing conditions. The closer you keep your poinsettia to those conditions the longer your poinsettia will stay looking good.



If you have enough light to read, you generally have enough light to keep your poinsettia healthy for a month or two. If not, you may need to use a "Grow Light" to supplement the needed light. A "Grow Light" will also enhance the red color, making your plant appear much brighter.

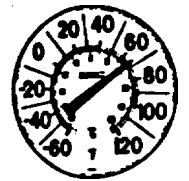


The colorful parts you see on poinsettias are not flowers, they are called 'Bracts'. Poinsettia's flowers are small and yellow and are located in the center of the large, colorful bracts. These bracts are to attract butterflies, moths, and other insects needed to pollinate the flowers. You can find varieties of poinsettias with large bracts or small bracts. You can also find a numerous array of colors including, white, yellow, pink, red, striped, and multi-colored bracts.

Temperature

Keep your poinsettia between 60 and 70 degrees. If you keep them too hot the blossoms will fade pre-

maturely. If you keep them too cold the leaves may drop off. Be very careful while transporting your poinsettias from the store to your home; don't let them freeze. Poinsettias don't like extreme temperature variations such as cold air from open doors and windows or hot air from furnace vents. Even warm temperatures from being set on top of a television set can cause your poinsettias to fade prematurely.

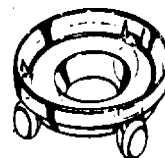


Water

Poinsettias, just like other blooming plants, need plenty of water during their blooming period. They may need to be watered once or twice a day; once or twice a week; or once or twice a month, depending upon the size of pot and the temperature of the room they are in. Water poinsettias when the soil, an inch below the surface, is dry to the touch.



If your plants are wrapped in foil make sure to remove the foil from the bottom of the pots to allow proper drainage. Place your poinsettias in saucers. Give your plants plenty of water, enough to fill the saucer. Be sure to empty the excess water from the saucer in one hour. Do not let your plants set in the water for long periods of time. Too much water may cause just as many problems as not enough water.



Fertilizer

Your poinsettia was fertilized regularly ever since it was planted in August; to make it look pretty in December. If you want your plant to stay looking its best you need to fertilize it regularly. Use **Miracle Gro All Purpose Plant Food** every two to three weeks. If you don't fertilize your plant it will still look nice for a while, it just won't look its best and it will drop some of its leaves prematurely.



What About Next year?

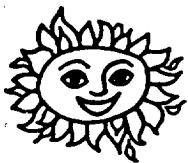
Keeping a poinsettia from year to year requires a little effort but, if you have the desire, it can be done. Water and fertilize your poinsettia regularly until the blossoms die and most of the leaves are gone. Gradually let your plant dry out, watering it just enough to keep the stems from shriveling. After the leaves drop off, put your poinsettia in a cool, dark area until spring. In May, cut the plant back to six inches tall, re-pot it, and allow new growth to start. After the danger of frost is past put your plant outside, preferably in a sunny area, for the summer. You can plant it directly in the soil or leave it in its container and treat it as a house plant. You can also plant your potted poinsettia in the ground: pot and all. Dig a large hole and line it with gravel, so the pot will not stand in water. Set the pot in the hole and fill the hole with soil.



Fertilize and water your plant regularly throughout the summer. If your plant is still in its pot, rotate it half a turn every few weeks to help balance the foliage. Watch for insect or disease problems and enjoy your unusual outdoor plant. Poinsettias planted outside in tropical areas (Mexico, South Africa, Southern California) can grow ten to fifteen feet tall and can be covered with hundreds of flowers.

Make it bloom again

When nighttime temperatures start dropping below 50 degrees bring your poinsettia inside the house. Put it in a sunny window and continue fertilizing and watering it regularly. Remember that plants don't need as much water when they are inside the house as they do when they are outside; make the necessary watering changes.



Poinsettias are very sensitive to changes in light.

Poinsettias naturally bloom when the nights get longer, similar to chrysanthemums. To make your poinsettia bloom in December your poinsettia needs 8 hours of good light and 16 hours of total darkness, starting early in October. You may have to put your plant in a closet to give it enough darkness. Make sure you keep the temperature between 60 and 70 degrees during the day and above 45 to 50 degrees at night. Any break in darkness, even opening the closet door for a few minutes, can prevent your poinsettia from blooming on time.



Fertilize your poinsettia regularly and water it consistently. By mid-November you should see color showing in the bracts. Keep up the closet treatment until December when you can keep your poinsettia out for Christmas.

Insects

Very few insects bother poinsettias during the Christmas season: the growers have sprayed them regularly to prevent insects. If you see a few little white flies, spray them with a house plant spray such as **I Bomb**. Do not spray the top of the plant or you may discolor the bracts. Spray the lower part of the plant and underneath the leaves. Yellow Sticky Paper set next to your plant is also a good way to control whiteflies, without using chemicals.

With the proper care, your poinsettia can stay colorful through the Christmas season well into spring. If you want to keep your plant from year to year all you need is patience, a little luck, and a green thumb.

Poinsettia Problems

The most common problem of poinsettias is leaves dropping off prematurely. Leaf drop can be caused by:

- a. Not enough light.
- b. Too much or too little water.
- c. Hot or cold drafts.
- d. Lack of fertilizer.

A Few Tips

- * Place your poinsettia in a place where it gets plenty of light.
- * Keep the temperature constant, between 60 and 70 degrees.
- * Water consistently and fertilize regularly.
- * Keep your plant out of drafts.