

POINSETTIA CARE

The colorful distinctive leaves of poinsettias often mark the beginning of winter's holiday season; Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. The newer forms or cultivars often remain colorful until spring. The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a native of Mexico and was introduced into United States in 1825 by the US Ambassador to Mexico, Poinsett.

Ohio State University research indicates that the poinsettia contains no chemicals commonly considered toxic. However, we recommend not eating the plants. While most people are not sensitive to its sap, it may cause a skin rash to some.



constant 50o to 55o is preferred. Bring the plant out of its resting stage in late April or early May. At this time, cut the stems back to 3 to 5 inches from the soil.



REPOTTING

If repotting is necessary, use a premium potting mix. Add 1 teaspoon of superphosphate or bonemeal to every 2 and 1/2 cups of soil mixture. If there was more than one plant in the pot, these may be separated into several pots.

Place a few small rocks or broken chards of pottery in the bottom of the pot over the drainage hole. Cover with potting soil. Place



root ball on top and fill around it with more potting soil. Gently firm the new soil around the ball to eliminate air pockets.



evening and leaving it there until 8 o'clock the next morning. Or you may just put a cardboard box over the plant for 14 hours, using the schedule above. Ideal temperature is 60o-65o during this process.



The reason for the darkness is that unless they have this continued darkness poinsettia will not set bud and flower. The ordinary lamp light in the home in the evening will prohibit plant development, resulting in few or no blooms during the coming holiday season.

CARE WHILE IN BLOOM

While your poinsettia is in bloom proper care will ensure maximum enjoyment and long life. The actual flowers of poinsettia are small, but immediately below these are brightly colored leaflike bracts. The bracts may be red, pink, white or salmon, with red the most popular color; and new bi-colors are becoming popular too. The important considerations are light, water and temperature in a comfortable range.

LIGHT

It is important to give the plant as much light as possible. Full daylight is best; near a window is ideal. Dim light or darkness will shorten its flowering life.

WATER

Check plant daily as some plants may need watering every day. This depends on the soil medium it is growing in and room conditions. Water thoroughly when the surface soil is dry to the touch. Discard water which collects in the saucer; poinsettias do not like wet feet.

TEMPERATURE

Ideal temperatures never exceed 72o daytime or 65o at night. Poinsettias really do best at 60o with high humidity. Temperatures above 75o with low humidity are detrimental to any poinsettia plant. Avoid hot or dry air, drafts or sudden change.

REFLOWERING

Holiday plants don't have to be discarded once they have finished blooming. A few basic principles can bring the plants into bloom again. Although the quality of the bloom may not be up to the commercial standards, the hobbyist will enjoy the challenge.

Once the plant has dropped its leaves or is no longer attractive let the soil dry out. Give no moisture during this resting stage unless the stems begin to shrivel or crack. Keep the plant in a cool place (such as a basement window ledge) as it still needs light. The temperature should not rise above 60o but a

After repotting, the plant should be set in a light, warm place and watered whenever the soil within the pot begins to dry out. As soon as night temperatures reach a minimum of 60o, the plant should be set out of doors (See poinsettia growth cycle chart on the back of this pamphlet). You'll need to sink the pot in a semi-shade location with well drained soil to keep the soil temperature constant. Give the pot a turn every few weeks to break off roots growing through the drainage holes.

Once the new shoots are one inch long, apply a complete fertilizer.

To prevent your poinsettia from getting too tall it is necessary to prune out (pinch-off) the new growing tips. Prune when the new growth is 4 to 6 inches long. If the new shoots grow another 5 inches before the latter part of August repeat the process. Pruning shapes the plant to the desired compact form. On newer self-branching varieties, one pruning may be enough.

When night temperatures become cool and there is danger of frost, bring the plant indoors to a sunny location and treat like other houseplants at this time.

The poinsettia is a photoperiod sensitive plant, which means it begins to set buds and produce flowers as winter nights become longer. The key point now is to see that the plant is kept in darkness for 14 continuous hours every day, starting about October 15. This can be accomplished by putting the plant into a dark closet at 6 o'clock every

PROPAGATION

Poinsettias may be propagated by taking leafy cuttings from early to mid-August. Cuttings should be about 4 inches long.

After cuttings are taken, dip in a rooting hormone compound. Place cuttings in pots, using vermiculite or perlite as growing medium until roots develop. Rooting compounds will increase the percentage of cuttings that root and the rate of rooting. Locate the pots where the humidity is high and there is plenty light but not direct sunlight.

The leaves on the cutting should not wilt. To prevent this, reduce the amount of leaf surface by cutting some of the basal leaves in half. The more light the cutting can be exposed to without wilting the more rapid is the rooting and the more vigorous is the rooted cutting. Keep the media moist but not saturated. An air temperature of 75-80o Fahrenheit day and 60o Fahrenheit night is optimum for rooting. Cuttings will root in 3 to 4 weeks. After roots appear transplant cuttings, using the same procedure as for repotting plants.

YOUR VERY OWN POINSETTIA

If you did everything suggested and your poinsettia comes into bloom, you will have a delightful reward. Your plant will probably be bushy with quite a number of blossoms.

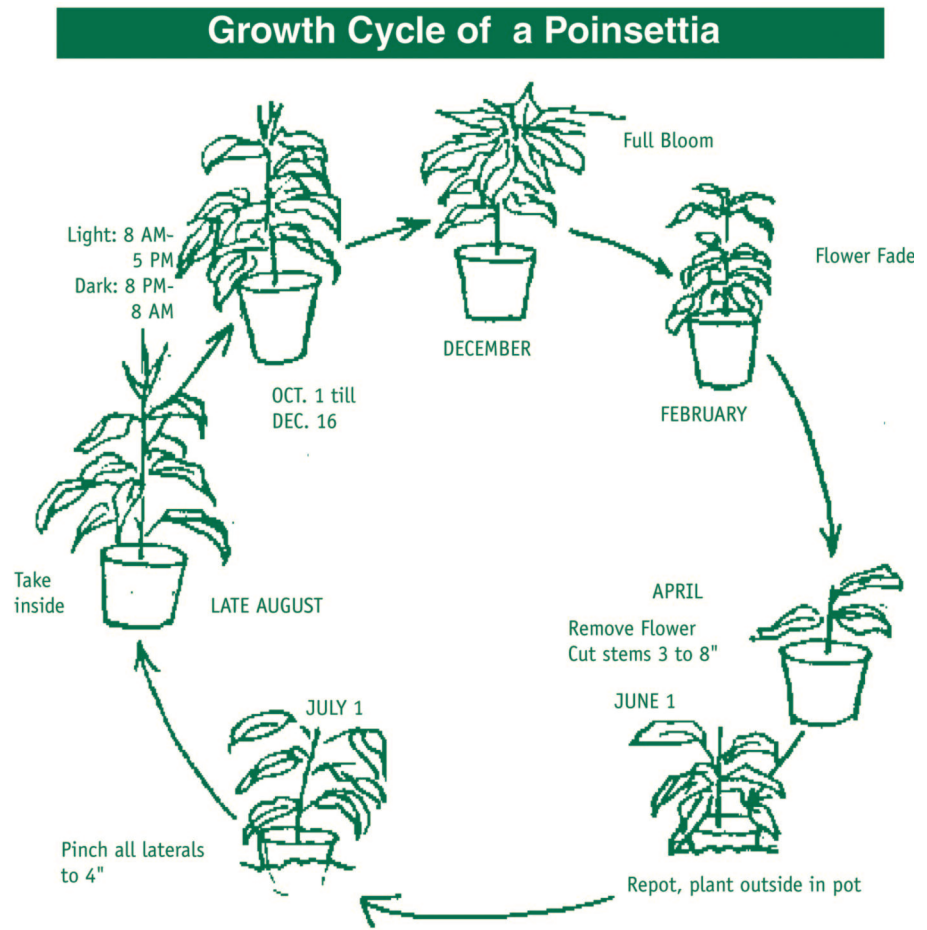


CUT FLOWERS

Poinsettias can also be used as cut flowers in addition to the traditional potted plants.

To do this:

1. Place 6 to 8-inch long stems into boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, then place into cold water. The boiling water keeps the latex in the stem from hardening and blocking the stem from taking up water. Holding the stem over a flame may be used in place of hot water but is less successful.
2. Make final cut in stem area treated by process in step 1.



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