

A Holiday Guide To Poinsettias



To Care For Your Poinsettia

- DO** place your plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day.
- DO** provide room temperatures of at least 68-70 degrees F.
- DO** water your plants thoroughly when the soil feels dry to the touch.
- DO** use a large roomy shopping bag to protect your plants when transporting them.
- DO** fertilize your plants after the blooming season with a balanced, all-purpose fertilizer.

- DON'T** place plants near cold drafts or excessive heat.
- DON'T** expose your plants to temperatures below 50 degrees.
- DON'T** allow plants to sit in standing water.
- DON'T** expose your plants to chilling winds when transporting.
- DON'T** fertilize your plants when they are in bloom.

Poinsettias Are Not Poisonous!

An old wives' tale that poinsettias are poisonous is simply not true. The Society of American Florists and Ohio State University conducted a scientific investigation disproving a charge that poinsettias are harmful. In fact, the Poisindex Information Service states that over 500 leaves ingested by a 50-pound child would demonstrate no toxicity. Of course, like all ornamental plants, the poinsettia is not intended for human consumption. (And who has room for a poinsettia after all the other holiday goodies!)

Poinsettias can be used in such a variety of ways they always make a wonderful gift. You never have to worry if the recipient already has one, since poinsettias look best displayed in groups. From a centerpiece on your holiday table to a miniature decorating the corner of an office desk, to a colorful hanging basket that can brighten any room, the poinsettia is always a perfect fit. Give one as a gift on National Poinsettia Day, December 12th!

Selecting a Healthy Poinsettia

Choose plants with thoroughly colored and expanded bracts. The bracts are the colorful part of the poinsettia, while the true flowers are the small yellow centers. Look for plants with dense, plentiful foliage all the way to the soil line. The plant should be about 2X larger than its pot size. Select plants with strong, stiff stems and no sign of wilting. Be wary of plants displayed in paper, plastic or mesh sleeves, for these can reduce air flow.

After the Holidays

With proper care, your poinsettia can last long past the holiday season. Here's how:

By early April, when the colored bracts begin to turn or fall, cut the plant back leaving four to six buds. Keep the plant near a sunny window, water and fertilize regularly, and by the end of May, you should see vigorous new growth. Cut your plants back again around July 4th and again by Labor Day to promote compact, full growth. Continue to nurture your plants as Autumn nears.

The Poinsettia begins to set buds and produce flowers as the nights become longer. Beginning October 1st, keep the plant in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night by moving plants into a dark room or placing a large box over them. During the day, allow six to eight hours of bright sunlight. Continue this for eight to ten weeks, and your plants will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms!