

POINSETTIA CARE

The Holiday Classic

Poinsettias are the most popular decorative plants for the holiday season. Poinsettia bracts, or flowers, may be red, pink, white, burgundy or marbled. In nature, poinsettias bloom according to day length. In their native habitat, they are actually a large growing, woody shrub that can reach 8 to 10 feet. Poinsettias are not poisonous. They are non toxic and pose no health threat to pets or children. While most people are not sensitive to the sap, it may cause a mild skin irritation.

Disease & Insect Care

Several insects may attack poinsettias. Whitelies, fungus gnats, mealy bugs and spider mites can be common. There are several insecticides available to treat all of these. Ask the sales staff for advice on which one will best meet your needs.

Growing Environment

To prolong a poinsettias blooming period, place the plant where it will receive a maximum amount of indoor sunlight. Avoid drafts or rapid temperature fluctuations that will result in premature leaf drop. Night temperatures should be no cooler than 60-65 degrees. Day temperatures should not exceed 80 degrees. Poinsettias will experience premature leaf drop at temperatures below 55 degrees. Keep the soil slightly moist but not soggy. Fertilize the poinsettia with a houseplant fertilizer every 7 to 10 days until the plant loses its tightly colored bracts. Most poinsettias are sold in a paper or plastic sleeve. They should not remain sleeved any longer than necessary as ethylene gas can accumulate and cause leaf drop and curling. Punch small holes in the bottom of the sleeve to prevent over watering.



Re-Flowering

Many of the new cultivars will keep their bracts and remain attractive into the summer. If the plant retains its leaves, treat it like any houseplant. Place it in a sunny location and apply a complete fertilizer once every two weeks. If a poinsettia drops its leaves or is no longer attractive, let the soil dry out and place the plant in a cool location. It will need some light, so a basement window ledge would be ideal. The temperature should not rise above 60 degrees with 50-55 degrees the best. Bring the plant out of resting in late April or early May. As soon as night temperature reaches a minimum of 60 degrees, the plant can be set outside. Cut the stems back to about 3-5" above the soil. To prevent the plant from getting too tall, pinch off the growing tips when they are about 4-6" long. Beginning September 25th, poinsettias need complete darkness from 5pm to 8am daily. Light from any source will delay flowering. Continue this until the plants bracts show color in mid November.