

Poinsettias

Elegant Color for the Holidays

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Photography By David Kyle

The bright, bold colors of Poinsettias are as much a part of the celebration of the holidays as the Christmas Tree. Poinsettias add elegant color to the home environment. A multitude of color choices are available - White, Pink, Rose, Marbled, Speckled, traditional Red and even Yellow can brighten any décor. The actual flowers of the poinsettia are the golden yellow clusters (cyathia) in the center of the colored leaves (bracts). Plants come in many forms as well, from the tiniest 3 or 4" plant to huge stock plants, topiary shapes and hanging baskets. There is a size or shape to fit every space!

Poinsettias are very sensitive to cold weather. Remember to cover the plant with a paper or plastic sleeve or bag, especially if the temperature is freezing, when you take it home or give to a friend. Do not leave your plant in your car while you finish shopping, even being exposed to 50-degree temperatures will cause it to drop its leaves. Poinsettias prefer to be in bright light and watered often enough to keep the soil slightly moist, not wet, when they are in color.

If your plant comes in a plastic or foil pot wrap, either remove it or punch a few holes in the bottom and place in a saucer. Do not let water sit in the saucer or bottom of the foil cover; it will rot the roots of the plant. Place the plant away from drafts, heat from appliances, radiators and ventilation ducts. Feed the plant weekly

with a balanced (20-20-20 or 10-10-10) fertilizer from summer until it has finished blooming.

After the plant is done blooming, it will lose its colored bracts and be somewhat dormant for a few months, water sparingly during this time just enough to keep soil from drying out and do not fertilize.

If you are enthusiastic about keeping the plant and trying to re-bloom it, remember this process requires a lot of dedication and effort. In early spring you will see signs of new growth; that is the time to repot it. Use good potting soil and a slightly larger pot. Keep in a cool site (65-70 degree days and 50-60 degree nights), with filtered light, resume regular watering and fertilize weekly.

If you wish to re-bloom the plant for of the next season, you will need to place it in a room that provides 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness and 10 hours of light for 8 weeks. Putting it in a closet or under a bag or box for the 14 hours of required darkness will work also. Remember to do it every night or the plant will not flower on time or properly.

Even with all this care it may not look like the plants in the store. Remember you cannot provide the same level of care a professional grower can. A greenhouse offers an environment with controlled lighting, controlled temperatures and a professional grower!



Enjoy your beautiful Poinsettia during the holiday season and if you love fussing over your houseplants try to keep one and re-bloom it for next season. Otherwise, there will be plenty of new plants for the next holiday season, maybe even new colors and types!



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