



Poinsettias Pointers



The poinsettia, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, is the most popular holiday plant in the United States with festive colors and easy care. Consider these few “pointers” to keep your poinsettia looking beautiful through the holiday season:

- Select the best poinsettia with large, brightly colored bracts (showy leaves), healthy green foliage at the base of the plant, and tight green to yellow flower buds. Avoid poinsettias where their flowers are shedding pollen or starting to fade.
- Do not expose your poinsettia to temperatures lower than 50 degrees F. Make sure it is covered, sleeved, or bagged before you take it outdoors into the cold weather. Exposure to extended cold periods can cause leaf drop, yellowing to blackening of bracts, and severe leaf curl.
- Immediately unwrap the plant once it is indoors. The wrap can trap gases the poinsettia naturally produces that hastens aging.
- Lighting should be bright, indirect sunlight, near a southern, western or eastern window. Direct sunlight exposure can cause fading and dry tips on foliage. Low light causes the bracts to turn green and drop.
- Temperatures should be 60-70 degrees F. Colder or warmer temperatures outside this range can shorten flowering and overall plant life.
- Avoid hot or cold drafts. Place poinsettias away from cold windows, main entryways, or heating vents. Drafts of any kind can cause moisture loss, leaf damage and leaf drop.
- Water when the soil feels dry to the touch. Thoroughly moisten the soil so water is draining from the bottom of the pot into a saucer, then discard the excess.
- Keep the soil evenly moist to slightly dry at all times. Plants exposed to higher light and lower humidity will need to be watered more often than plants in low light and high humidity locations.
- Remove the foil pot cover when watering or poke drainage holes in it. Poinsettias will die from root rot if overwatered and sitting in excess water in the foil wrap.
- Water with ice cubes! With this technique you slowly and evenly water as the ice cube melts. One cube per inch of diameter, so a 6” pot would require six ice cubes every few days. Check your soil often and only apply when it feels dry.
- Do not fertilize your poinsettia when flowering. A water soluble or granular flowering plant food can be used if you decide to grow the poinsettia year round in April-November.
- The cooler you keep your poinsettia indoors (around 60 degrees F) the longer the plant will flower and the bracts will stay colorful. Once the flowers fade, the bracts will start fading too. Flowering time can last anywhere from 2-8 weeks with some varieties lasting into March with the best care.
- Celebrate National Poinsettia Day on December 12th!
- For post-holiday care and instructions on re-flowering please refer to our “Caring for Your Poinsettia After the Holidays” garden guide and enjoy!