



Harper's

SCOTTSDALE-MESA

POINSETTIA CARE FOR THE CONSUMER

The Poinsettia, often referred to as the "Christmas Plant", was first brought to the USA from its native land Mexico, in 1825 by the first US ambassador Joel Robert Poinsette. Today, with the multitude of colors, sizes and shapes available, poinsettias offer an abundance of holiday cheer for every décor.

Tips for the Wise Consumer

Thinking about the following tips while making your poinsettia selection will help you to have a plant that will last throughout the holiday season.

If you buy your poinsettia at a retail store that does not specialize in plants, the store may not provide proper care for the plant. Remember when purchasing your poinsettia to choose the one that is not wilted and appears to be cared for. Avoid the plants with foliage that is beginning to yellow.

The actual flowers of the poinsettia plant are the golden yellow clusters (cyathias) in the center of the colored bracts (the colored bracts are actually the plant's leaves that changed color to attract insects and not flower petals as most consumers think). As you choose your poinsettia, make sure the plant you choose still has the cyathias.

If you purchase your poinsettia from a store that has kept the plastic or paper sleeve packaging on the plant, remember; if this packaging has been kept on the poinsettia for a lengthy amount of time, the leaves may turn yellow and drop before the holiday season is over.

You, as a consumer, should look for the wide variety of colors, abundance of cyathias, nicer bracts, and long lasting colors. Fischer poinsettias offer all these qualities for you - ask your favorite place of purchase for the Fischer brand of poinsettias.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

When you walk out of the store with your poinsettia, remember that the plant needs protection from the weather, especially if the temperature is freezing. If the store did not provide a plant sleeve for you plant, ask them for one - even a grocery bag would be helpful. Your poinsettia should not be exposed (even in the wrapping) to the freezing conditions for more than a short trip to the car. Do not leave your poinsettia in your car while you finish shopping. If the poinsettia is chilled it may begin to drop the leaves. Immediately unwrap your poinsettia when you arrive at your destination. Enjoy!

At Home

Locate your plant in a spot with bright natural light, but not exposed to direct sunlight for more than one to two hours. If in a sunny location, make sure the plant never dries out.

Do not place your plant in an area that is exposed to drafts, heat from appliances, radiators or ventilation ducts.

Your poinsettia should be placed in an area not exposed to heavy traffic. And, though **not poisonous**, the plant should be placed away from small children and animals. Ingestion of the plant could cause discomfort if eaten.

Important

If the poinsettia you bring home has a pot cover or foil wrapper, pierce the bottom to allow proper drainage. Remember to place your plant on a waterproof container to catch the overflow when you water.

If you are an enthusiastic gardner, you may want to try to reflower your poinsettia for next year's holiday season. Just remember, if you seem to loose interest in this along the way, you are in the company of many others. This process requires a lot of dedication and effort.

First Step - Care

This holiday season - remember to take care of your plant (refer to the preceding care tips). Do not let your plant dry out!

February - Light

Your poinsettia may begin to fade in color. Keep your plant near a sunny window.

April - Trimming

During the middle of April, cut the stems back to approximately 6" above the soil.

May - Fertilizing

Start fertilizing with a balanced (20/20/ 20 or 20/10/20 content of nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus) fertilizer at one teaspoon per gallon of water every third watering.

June - Repotting time?

Remove the plant, and check to see if the plant needs repotting (an abundance of roots). If you do repot, use commercial potting soil and a little larger pot. The pot may be placed outside in light shade when the temperature does not fall below 55^o F or, you can leave the plant inside. Fertilize with one teaspoon of a balanced fertilizer per gallon of water every second time you water.

Middle of August - Inside Care

The plant should be kept inside in direct sunlight. Cut the stems back again, this time leave three to four leaves per shoot. Continue to water and fertilize.

Middle of September to the First of December

The plant should stay in the direct sunlight (next to a window) until 5:00pm. From 5:00pm to 8:00am the plant should be placed in complete darkness. You may be wondering "How do I accomplish this?" Some options are; putting the plant in a closet or putting the plant in a light-tight box. If you can think of an unique idea for this dilemma, please let us know.

Now, you have your poinsettia to enjoy again for the new holiday season. But wait, you may be wondering "Why doesn't it look like the plants in stores?" Remember that even though you have provided all the care your plant needs by following the directions outlined above - you cannot provide a professional greenhouse environment. The professional greenhouse offers an environment with controlled lighting, controlled temperatures, and professional growers. This environment will most likely produce a larger, fuller plant than you could produce in your home.

If you should decide to repeat the reflowering process, your plant will be about 4-6 inches taller each year and should accordingly be cut back about 8" - 10" above soil line and definitely repotted into a bigger pot.