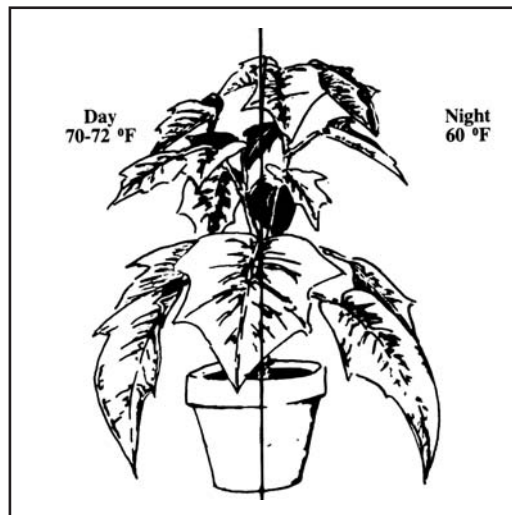
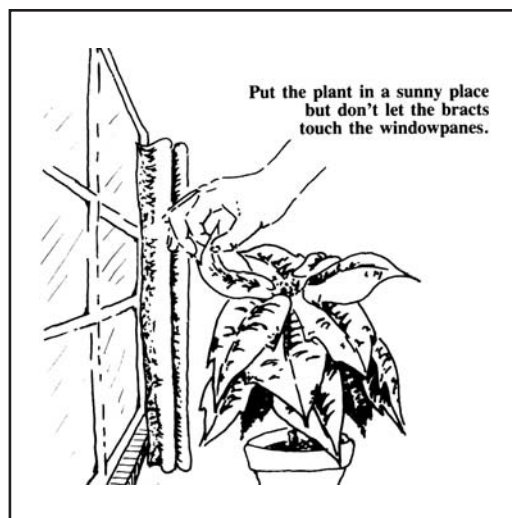


# Caring For Poinsettias

Your poinsettia will last many weeks, perhaps months, if you care for it properly. The length of time depends on the maturity of the plant at purchase, the variety, and how you treat the plant.

## Plant Maturity

When buying poinsettias, check the maturity of the plant. The colorful bracts actually are vividly colored leaves, not flowers. The flower part of the poinsettia is the tiny yellow beadlike structure in the center of the bracts. Mature flowers are slightly



swollen, with the cup showing nectar. Avoid purchasing plants with flowers that have dropped from the plant.

## Varieties

Plant breeders have introduced new varieties of poinsettias. These new varieties offer more flowers per stem and a wider color range. Some bloom as early as Thanksgiving, while others bloom closer to Christmas. Even with their differences, one trait in common is longevity. These new varieties last much longer than do their parents. With proper care, these varieties often remain in good condition for two or three months.

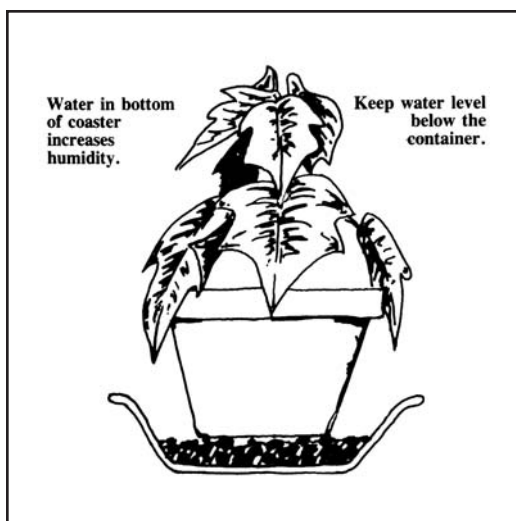
## Placement For Long Life

During the holidays, use the poinsettia as needed for decorative effects. When possible, place the plant in the sunniest exposure to your home. Avoid letting the bracts touch the cold windowpanes, since freezing outdoor temperatures can cause damage.

Your poinsettia was greenhouse grown at day temperatures of 70-72 degrees Fahrenheit and night temperatures of about 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Your plant will last longer if you provide these same temperatures.

In addition, the greenhouse had high relative humidity. Most homes and apartments have low relative humidity in winter because of modern heating systems. You should increase the humidity around the poinsettia plant when possible. One of the best ways is to place the plant in a saucer filled with gravel. Add water so evaporation from the gravel provides additional humidity for the plant. Be sure to keep the water level just below the bottom of the pot to avoid soggy soil (can cause root rot).

The poinsettia does not like sudden drastic temperature changes or drafty locations. Keep the plant away from radiators, air vents, and gas space heaters.



## Continued Growth After Christmas

Poinsettias can be grown through the year to flower the following Christmas, but critical cultural conditions are necessary for quality flowers.

Even with proper care, some varieties of poinsettias fade and begin to wither after several weeks. During this period, let the soil in the pot dry, but not so much as to shrivel the entire stem. Let the plant remain in a warm area as it becomes semi-dormant. As soon as a danger of frost is passed, replot the plant and place it out-of-doors.

Many of the new varieties of poinsettias have foliage and bracts to remain through the entire winter. These, too, can be placed out-of-doors during the summer. Many home gardeners remove the plants from the

pot and place them in a flower bed where the plant can receive full sun. Other gardeners like to replot the plant to a larger container. In either case, cut the stem back to a height of 3 to 5 inches above the soil line.

The poinsettia is a heavy feeder, and you should fertilize the plant every 14 days. Prepare a fertilizer solution by mixing 1 tablespoon of complete fertilizer, such as 13-13-13, to a quart of water. Use about 1 cup of the solution each time you fertilize. You can also use a houseplant fertilizer according to directions.

Be sure to keep the plants moist during the hot, dry months of June, July, and August. New growth should appear within two weeks after planting. As the growth begins to reach 3 to 5 inches, tip pinch the growth to encourage multiple branching. Do not pinch after September 1.

As danger of frost approaches, move the plant indoors or to a protective structure where it will get a maximum of sunlight during the day and a minimum temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit at night.

From September 15 until blooming, protect the plant from stray light after sundown. Even a small amount of light from a garage, overhead light, or bright flashlight will cause the plant not to flower by Christmas. If it is necessary to grow the plant in a room where you must turn on light at night, make a cover for the plant by using a dark material or move it to a darkened room each night. A cardboard box is a good cover if there are no cracks through which light can enter. By late November, the bracts should begin to color and the poinsettia should be in full flower by Christmas.

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### Information Sheet 227

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. JOE H. MCGILBERRY, Director

(POD-06-05)