

Poinsettia Care

Poinsettias have long been the most popular holiday plant — even though they aren't grown for their flowers! The TRUE flowers are the small yellow berries, called cyathia, in the center of the large colorful bracts. Follow these simple tips to enjoy your poinsettia throughout the holidays:

- Place your plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day. If direct sun can't be avoided, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain.
- Provide temperatures between 65-72°, away from cold drafts or excessive heat. Generally speaking, if you are comfortable, so is your poinsettia. Avoid placing plants near appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.
- Water your plant when the soil feels dry to the touch. Be careful not to over water or allow it to sit in standing water. Always remove a plant from any decorative container before watering and allow the water to drain completely.
- Avoid exposure to temperatures below 50°. Poinsettias are sensitive to cold. When transporting them, use a large, roomy shopping bag to protect your plant from chilling winds.
- Fertilize your plant AFTER THE BLOOMING SEASON with a balanced, all-purpose fertilizer. We recommend ferti•lome All Purpose Water Soluble Plant Food (20-20-20). DON'T fertilize your plant when it is in bloom.

Despite the myths you might have heard, poinsettias are NOT poisonous. The scientific evidence demonstrating the poinsettia's safety is well documented. However, as with all ornamental plants, poinsettias are not intended for human or animal consumption and certain individuals may experience an allergic reaction to poinsettias.

How to Rebloom Your Poinsettia

By late March or early April, cut back your poinsettia to about 8" in height. Continue a regular watering program and fertilize your plant with ferti•lome All Purpose Water Soluble Plant Food, a water-soluble fertilizer. By the end of May you should see vigorous new growth.

After all chance of frost has passed and night temperatures average 55° or above, place your plants outdoors. Continue regular watering and fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks with the water soluble fertilizer. Around June 1, you may transplant your poinsettia into a larger pot. Select a pot no more than 4" larger than the original pot. Use a soilless mix with a considerable amount of organic matter, such as ferti•lome Ultimate Potting Mix. This would be a good time to use ferti•lome Start-N-Grow, a slow-release fertilizer.

To keep plants bushy and compact prune in late June or early July. Be sure not to prune your plant later than September 1. Keep the plants in indirect sunlight and water regularly.

Starting October 1, the plants must be kept in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night. The best way to accomplish this is by covering them overnight with a large box. During October, November and early December, poinsettias require 6 - 8 hours of bright sunlight daily, with night temperatures between 60 - 70°. Temperatures outside of this range could also delay flowering.

Poinsettias will naturally come into bloom during November or December, depending on the individual cultivar. Timing to produce blooms for the Christmas holiday can be difficult outside of the controlled environment of a greenhouse. Stray light of any kind, such as from a street light or household lamps, could delay or entirely halt the re-flowering process.

Continue the normal watering and fertilizer program. Carefully following this regime for 8 to 10 weeks should result in a colorful display of blooms for the holiday season!

