



# Poinsettia Care Guide

The Poinsettia is the most popular potted plant in the country. Because it naturally “blooms” for the holidays and comes in traditional Christmas colors it has become synonymous with Christmas. And since poinsettias bloom for such an extended period they can be enjoyed from Thanksgiving right on through New Years when properly cared for.

What You'll Need:	
Essential Items	Desirable Items
Poinsettia	Poinsettia Plant Food
Saucer	Foil & Bow
Sleeve for transport home	Small watering can



## Direct from the Greenhouse

Town & Country Gardens grows thousands of poinsettias each year to bring color and warmth to your home at Christmas time. Selecting your plant direct from the greenhouse ensures a long-lived, healthy plant that can be enjoyed throughout the holiday season. At Town & Country you are free to select from hundreds of plants in a dozen colors or more. You don't have to worry that they have been stuffed inside a cellophane sleeve for days on end, sitting inside a store with no care. Our poinsettias are lovingly cared for daily by our trained staff to ensure your success.

## Taking your Plant Home

Temperatures are often below freezing in east Idaho in November and December so you'll need to provide some protection to your poinsettia when transporting it home. We will slip your poinsettia inside a paper or plastic sleeve before you leave the greenhouse to help protect it from the cold. If the weather is severely cold you may want to warm up your car before setting your plant inside for the trip home. Avoid exposing the plant to cold temperatures for more than a few minutes; a chilled or frozen plant will wilt and begin to drop leaves very quickly. Once inside, remove the protective wrapping immediately and enjoy your new poinsettia.

## Caring for your Poinsettia

With proper care, your poinsettia will last through the holiday season and retain its bracts well into the new year. Pay close attention to the following care tips:

- Place in a room where there is sufficient natural light to read fine print but not where the sun will shine directly on the plant.
- Avoid hot or cold drafts or excessive heat from appliances, heaters, or ventilating ducts.
- Place the plant high enough to be away from traffic, and out of reach of unmonitored children and pets.
- Set the plant in or on a waterproof saucer to protect your furnishings.
- Water the plant thoroughly when the soil surface is dry to the touch. Remember to discard excess water from the saucer. **If your poinsettia is wrapped in foil, be sure to empty the excess water from the foil, or poke holes in the foil to allow the excess water to drain out.**
- To prolong the bright color of the bracts, temperatures should not exceed 72° F during the day and 65° F at night.

## Re-flowering your Poinsettia

If you have a green thumb, you may want to try your hand at re-flowering your poinsettia next year. If you follow these directions carefully, it is possible to have your poinsettia in bloom for Christmas.

**December:** Full bloom. Water as needed

**April 1:** Color has faded. Cut stems back to about 8". Keep near sunny window and fertilize when new growth appears.

**June 1:** Repot if necessary. Be sure pot has drainage holes and is no more than 4" larger in diameter than original pot. Fertilize as you would any flowering potted plant. Continue to water when dry to the touch. You may move plant outside under light shade if nighttime temperatures do not fall below 55° F.

**July 1:** Cut stems back, leaving 3 to 4 leaves per shoot. Water and fertilize as needed.

**October 1 through Dec. 1:** Poinsettias need at least 14 hours of darkness every day to trigger them to bloom. Ensure that the plant receives bright filtered sunlight from 8 am to 5 pm. Then place in dark (NO LIGHT) 5 pm to 8 am. Setting a box over the plant each evening or placing it in a dark room or closet every night can accomplish this. It also helps if nighttime temperatures are maintained between 60° and 70° F. Temperatures outside this range may delay flowering.

**The Key to Success** is to follow the strict light/dark instructions very carefully.

## Did You Know?

The color of a poinsettia is provided by modified leaves called "bracts". The actual flowers are the golden-yellow clusters located at the center of the bracts.

The poinsettia is not a poisonous plant. Research at Ohio State University has proven that the poinsettia is not lethal to humans or pets. However, your poinsettia and all house plants should be out of reach of small children since varying degrees of discomfort may be experienced if plant parts are ingested.

The name poinsettia comes from the United States' first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Robert Poinsett, who was enamored with the wild plant and sent several back to his home in Greenville, South Carolina in 1825. In the 1960's the plant began growing in popularity when Paul Ecke, a grower in Encinitas, California decorated the sets of the Bob Hope Show and the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson each year with poinsettias.

Today more than 60 million poinsettias are grown each year in the United States, accounting for one-third of all sales of flowering potted plants.

In the wild, the poinsettia can reach heights of 12 feet with leaves measuring six to eight inches across. It is actually a small tropical tree belonging to the Euphorbia plant family. Its botanical name is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*.

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