

INFORMATION

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CARING FOR POINSETTIAS

NATIVE of North America, the Poinsettia or Christmas star has become the most popular Yuletide pot plant. Way back in the 18th century, the tale of the poor young Mexican boy who picked the bright bracts 'the leaves' and gave them as a gift, is far removed from the compact, bushy plants available from the garden centre.

In this country, the Poinsettia has been available for the last thirty years, but since the 1960's when much improved types such as the 'Vinterstar' and 'Angelica' appeared, they have become easier to care for.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE The bright, startling, red Poinsettias are undoubtedly the most popular. Bright new colours are appearing each year like 'Pink Perfection' and 'White Wonderland'. All require the same level of care.



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- 1) **Positioning Your Plant** - All plants require light, but Poinsettias will tolerate slight shade.
- 2) **Watering Your Plant** - Water regularly, but allow soil to moderately dry out in between waterings. Use tepid water. Avoid getting water on the bracts.
- 3) **Temperature** - Ideally around 60 degrees F. Do not keep plant behind closed curtains at night. Avoid direct dry air. Keep away from draughts. If dry air is a problem, stand the plant on Hortag in a saucer. Keep pebbles moist.
- 4) **Feeding your Poinsettias** - Poinsettias should be fed every fortnight with Baby Bio, to keep in tip top condition.

7 POINT PLAN TO MAKE YOUR POINSETTIA BLOOM

- 1) In Spring, cut all stems down to 3". The compost should be kept dry-ish and the pot placed in a mild, shady position.
- 2) In May, water and re-pot, increasing the original pot size by 5 cm (2"). Use Levingtons compost.
- 3) Shoots appear - thin out to 5 or 6 new stems (you can use the prunings as cuttings - use a rooting hormone). Keep plants in a bright spot and feed regularly with phostrogen.
- 4) From early September onwards, start light control.
- 5) At 6.00p.m. each evening, cover plant with a black polythene bin liner and remove each morning at 8.00a.m. The plant must be kept in total darkness for 14 hours a day.
- 6) Continue no.5 for eight weeks.
- 7) After 8 weeks, discard the black bag. Look after plant as normal.

- * The sequence of leaf colour change is green, pale green, yellow, red tinge, red bract.
- * The sequence will occur several weeks after stopping the blackout treatment.
- * Commercial growers use dwarfing chemicals - your plant will be taller.
- * A little perseverance will reward when your Poinsettia turns red next year.

TROUBLE SHOOTING GUIDE

Loss of leaves/Yellow/Brown:-

Too dry an atmosphere - Follow guideline 3 above.

Loss of leaves following wilting:-

Overwatering kills - Follow guideline 2 above.

Loss of leaves:-

Plant too cold or light levels too low.