

Poinsettias

Q: I love the poinsettias my family got me for Christmas this year. How do I keep them from dying out after the holidays?

A: Poinsettias are a beautiful addition to the home around the Christmas holidays. These showy plants originated in southern Mexico and came to the United States in 1825 when botanist and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Robert Poinsette, had some of these plants sent to his home in South Carolina. There are now various colors such as white, salmon, pink and even yellow and orange varieties available.

Poinsettias like bright light but not direct sunlight. They also like an even distribution of moisture. Make sure your container is well drained and remove that shiny wrapper from the pot to keep them from getting "wet feet." Too much moisture and dry soil will cause these plants to wilt and die.

While researching the poinsettia, we found more interesting information about this holiday plant. We have always heard that the poinsettia was poisonous to humans and animals. Numerous studies of this folklore have been performed and found it to be false. However, they do not recommend eating it since it may cause stomach discomfort and allergic reactions. Here is a North Carolina State University Extension website that has more information: <https://poinsettias.ces.ncsu.edu/homeowners/are-poinsettias-poisonous/>

More information about the care and history of the poinsettia can be found in this Sequatchie County UT Extension Master Gardener Newsletter: <https://sequatchie.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2020/10/December-Newsletter.pdf>.

With a little planning, you can get your poinsettia to color again next year for the holiday season. According to the Utah State University Extension Service, Beginning the first of October, put the plant in complete darkness as soon as the sun sets, allowing a minimum of 14 hours of darkness. A bag can be placed over the plant, or it can be set in a closet throughout the day. By the end of November, it will start to color, and you will be able to enjoy it for another season. This Utah State University Extension Service website will give you more information about getting the most of your lovely new poinsettia: https://extension.usu.edu/news_sections/home_family_and_food/poinsettia-care.

Happy holidays to all you plant lovers and your families. We have enjoyed your questions and even learned a little ourselves. Keep those questions coming!