

GARDEN GROWING INSTRUCTIONS FOR POINSETTIA PLANTS RECEIVED DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON



After the plant has passed its prime, which is usually in late January or February, it is time to withhold the water --- the plants should go into a dormant stage for a month or so.

When the weather warms up in March or April and after the threat of frost is passed, cut back the plant to 6 inches above soil level. At the beginning, water sparingly and after about two weeks, new shoots will start to develop at the "eyes" of the stem where the leaves were attached last year. Knock the plant out of the container and plunge outside in a well prepared garden bed. The soil must drain properly, and there should be considerable organic matter such as peat moss, leaf mold, or redwood sawdust incorporated into your soil mixture. Poinsettias will do best in a protected area and along the south wall is usually quite satisfactory.

Immediately after planting, give a thorough, double soaking watering to the plant. The amount of water needed thereafter will depend on the type of weather that prevails as well as the amount of growth that is on the plant. When there is little growth and cool weather conditions, naturally not very much water is required. When there is a great deal of foliage and much warm weather, of course, the demand for water is greater. Generally speaking, the plant should be watered well about once a week during the summer time.

To keep the plant from becoming too tall, cut it back on July 4th. Do this by taking the new growth, which came out from the plant this year, and cutting it back to about 6 inches from the old stem. This procedure will give much shorter plants at Christmas with twice as many stems.

Starting about June 1st and continuing until December 1st, plants should be fertilized at least once a month with your favorite garden fertilizer. Be sure it is high in nitrogen.

Various insects can attack poinsettias during the summer season including mealy bugs, aphids and red spiders. Use common sense and your garden preventative spray program. Many materials will work well.

To properly set buds so that the flower will develop in the fall of the year, the poinsettias must have enough consecutive long nights in the fall to properly go from a vegetative to a flower state. If a streetlight, porch light, or some other light source shines on your poinsettias during September, October or November, your plant may be delayed in blooming.

At best, poinsettias are not usually good cut flowers, but if you want to try, this might help: after cutting the stem, place the bottom of the stem into 2 inches of wood alcohol (from your drug store) or boiling water. Leave for two minutes and then put the stems into deep, cold water. Poinsettias, like other cut flowers, will last longer if kept at low temperatures (60 degrees) and higher humidity as compared to higher temperatures (75 to 80 degrees) and lower humidity. For longer life, add one teaspoon of household bleach per gallon of water to keep it pure and be sure to put in some commercial floral preservative also.

Good Luck!