

## **Poinsettia Care**

With good care, a poinsettia should be beautiful for 2-3 months. Poinsettias are tropical plants that should be kept above 50 degrees. They should be kept in a warm vehicle till you get home, not in a trunk and definitely not in the back of a truck. In your home, put the poinsettia in a well lighted area away from drafts and heat vents. Water the poinsettia when the pot becomes lightweight or when the soil becomes dry to the touch, about once a week. Water the plant thoroughly in a sink, letting it drain, before putting it back where it was. If the poinsettia is wrapped in foil, tilt the plant, being careful to hold the rootball, and pour the excess water in the sink.

## **How to make a poinsettia re-bloom next year**

With proper care and devotion you can also get poinsettias to bloom. Some prefer not to mess with this process, and just enjoy the poinsettia as a Christmas decoration. .

For a good healthy start, I would take the poinsettia out of the foil or cut some holes in the bottom of the foil to allow the water to drain out when it is watered. If it is in a basket, I would remove it from the basket to water it. When you water your poinsettia, try not to get much water on the leaves, try to get the water straight to the roots and soil. I like to water mine in the sink, so I can pour plenty of water to it and it can drain out the bottom. Only water the poinsettia when it needs it (when it feels light, or the soil is dry to the touch), poinsettias don't like to stay wet all the time.

Around the first of March, start fertilizing the poinsettia with a good balanced fertilizer. A water soluble fertilizer like Peter's, or Miracle-Grow works well.

At the end of March – the first of April cut the poinsettia back to about 6"-8". Continue to water and fertilize regularly.

About the first of May or after the chance for frost has left, take your poinsettia outside to a shady location protected from hard wind. And don't forget to water and fertilize regularly. They can be easy to forget if they are not in a place you see daily.

In 3-5 weeks it should be getting tough. They stay fuller and more compact if they start getting some full sun for half a day. It is best to work them into the sun over a week or two, starting out in morning sun only. You can also repot the plant at this time, or plant it in the ground, if you have a well drained bed with plenty of organic matter mixed in. When choosing a pot, pick one with holes for the water to drain out and it can be 4"-6" larger in diameter. Be sure to use a high quality potting soil. We prefer Fafard brand. Continue to water as needed and fertilize regularly.

A second pruning may be needed in August if it is getting too big. It is important that you don't cut it back after Labor Day. This is also the time that you need to dig up your poinsettia if it is planted in the ground and transplant it to a suitable container with

holes. The poinsettia needs September to shoot out the new stem ends that will form the bracts in October and November. Continue to water and fertilize.

You should bring your poinsettia inside to a bright sunny room, away from drafts and heat vents before there is any chance of frost. I recommend October 1.

The poinsettia also needs 12-14 hours of total uninterrupted darkness every night, starting Oct. 1. Poinsettias need long nights that start in the fall to trigger the blooms to set and the leaves to color up. Something as simple as a light coming on for a second will make the poinsettia think it has had 2 short nights, instead of 1 long night, and delay blooming. Putting the poinsettia in a closet or putting a box over the plant from 5:00 pm till 7:00 am works well. Do this for 8 weeks, and continue to water as needed (it probably won't need to be watered as often as earlier). Fertilize regularly till Thanksgiving. You won't need to fertilize from Thanksgiving till March.

Don't forget to put the poinsettia back in a bright room close to a window during the day. They need 6-8 hours of sun during the day to get good color and prevent it from dropping leaves.

With proper care you should have your poinsettia in bloom for the Christmas season.