
POINSETTIAS

The poinsettia, or *Euphorbia pulcherrima* is a member of the Euphorbiaceae family. This family of plants is known for its modified leaves and stunning array of colors. The species is indigenous to Mexico and was discovered by the first United States Minister to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett in 1825. It is a well-known plant that is a popular addition to Christmas floral displays. The colorful leaves of the poinsettia are often thought of as flowers, although they are not. These modified leaves are called bracts, which can change into a multitude of different colors. The colors range from red, to pink, white, yellow, pale green, or even marbled. The true flowers of the poinsettia are very small and do not often attract pollinators. They are grouped in the center of each leaf bunch and are called cyathia. There is also a common misconception that poinsettias are toxic. Since they are a member of the spurge family, their sap can be a mild skin or eye irritant. However, according to the American Journal of Emergency Medicine the 22,793 reported toxicity cases resulted in zero fatalities. The sap is only a mild irritant to both humans and pets. However, it is still recommended to keep these plants away from pets. In modern cultivation, the vast majority of these colorful plants are grown by one family. The Ecke Family has been responsible for the popularity and numerous new species over the span of over 100 years and currently controls more than 70% of American production of poinsettias.



Latin Name: *Euphorbia pulcherrima*

Type: Evergreen seasonal houseplant

Hardiness: Not frost hardy

Size: 6-12'

Exposure: Bright indirect light

Growth Rate: Medium

Growth Habit: Rounded and bushy

Where should I plant my poinsettia?

Poinsettias are not frost tolerant and do not like temperatures to drop below 50 degrees. They can be enjoyed outside during the warmer growing season but do need to be brought in for winter. They enjoy bright, morning sun and prefer to be repotted every year or so. Repotting is not usually necessary during the first growing season. Simply water your plant and enjoy its colorful bracts during the holiday season.

How much water will my poinsettia need?

Poinsettias prefer to be evenly moist. They are sensitive to both extreme hot and cold drafts, which can damage their bracts and cause leaf drop. Often these plants will alert you when they are in need of watering by drooping, however it is not a good idea to stress the plant in this way. They enjoy temperatures of about 65-75 degrees in a bright, sunny location. If the temperature dips below this range, no extra water is needed. Check your plant often to establish the correct watering schedule based on your environment.

When should I fertilize my poinsettia?

Poinsettias enjoy a moderate feeding schedule with a balanced fertilizer. Since their bracts are not true flowers, they do not have high potassium needs such as a flowering perennial. Feeding once every two weeks is key to optimal plant health.

Are there any pests I should be aware of?

Poinsettias can suffer from a variety of foliar and stem diseases such as Scab, gray mold, botrytis and powdery mildew.