

December 16, 2015



Poinsettias Year Round!

By Dave Hale

UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Once the holidays are behind us, there really is no reason to toss out those beautiful Poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*). With a little attention throughout the year, you can get these tropical plants to re-bloom for next years' holiday season. Growing poinsettias throughout the year is also a great way to involve children in calendar-driven activities, as these plants have unique requirements throughout the growing year.

Home for the holidays – Introduce your poinsettia to windows allowing direct sun in a room that is 65 – 75 degrees F. Premature leaf drop may result when leaves are left in contact with a cold window. Water requirements are typical for house plants: water when the surface feels dry to the touch, but avoid over-watering, which will cause the plant to wilt and leaves to drop.

January - March: Keep watering the poinsettia whenever the soil surface is dry.

April - Gradually decrease water. Be careful the stem does not begin to shrivel. This is a sign the plant is too stressed and is dying.

May - Cut the stems back to about four inches and repot in a slightly larger container, using new potting soil. Water it well and place the newly potted plant back into a bright, directly sunlit window where the room stays in the temperature range of 65 - 75 degrees F. Resume watering whenever the surface of the soil feels dry. Begin incorporating a complete fertilizer once new growth appears.

June - Move the poinsettia outside in a partially shaded location and maintain your watering and fertilizing schedule.

December 16, 2015

July - Pinch back each stem by about one inch. This is to encourage a stout, well branched plant. If the stems don't get pinched, the poinsettia will grow tall and spindly.

August - By mid-August, the stems should have branched and leafed out. Once again, pinch or cut the new stems, leaving three to four leaves on each shoot. Continue watering and fertilizing.

September - Continue regular watering and fertilizing outside. Make sure the temperature stays above 65 degrees F. Bring them back inside when the overnight temperatures dip below 60 degrees.

October - To re-bloom, poinsettias need about ten weeks with 12 hours or less of sunlight per day. Nature provides this naturally, as the days grow shorter. Continue watering and fertilizing.

Around the last week of November, you should start to see flower buds.

December - Stop fertilizing about December 15th. Keep watering and treat your plant the way you did when you first brought it home in bloom. If all has gone well, it should be back in bloom and ready to begin the process all over again.

Claims of poinsettia toxicity are largely exaggerated. The plants are only *mildly* toxic to cats and dogs. If ingested, mild signs of vomiting, drooling, or rarely, diarrhea may be seen. Since the taste of poinsettia leaves is reportedly very unpleasant, it is unlikely that a child or animal who attempts to eat or chew the leaves will continue to do so after the first taste.

Enjoy the pride of getting these beautiful, safe and hardy tropical plants to bloom year after year!

There is no Master Gardener public education class this Saturday.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmg>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.