



Poinsettias, Part Two: Selection and Care
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The Poinsettia should look full, balanced and attractive on all sides; and be about 2.5 times taller than the diameter of its container. It should not be drooping or wilted. Choose a plant with dark green foliage down to the soil line. Do not select a plant with lots of green around bract edges. Do not select plants with fallen or yellow leaves. Examine the cyathia, the plant's "true" flowers (located at the base of the colored bracts). Select only Poinsettias with cyathia that are green or red-tipped, and fresh-looking. Do not select a plant with yellow cyathia, or with yellow pollen covering the flowers -- yellow cyathia and pollen indicate that the plant is past its prime and will not last. Check the soil: if it is wet and the plant is wilted, it could have root rot. Check the undersides of leaves for insects, such as aphids and whiteflies. Avoid plants that are crowded close together as this causes premature bract loss. Avoid plants that have been displayed in paper or plastic sleeves, as this causes the Poinsettia to deteriorate at a faster rate. When you take the Poinsettia home, have it sleeved if the outside temperature is lower than 50 degrees.

The length of time you can enjoy your Poinsettia is dependent on: the maturity of the plant; when you buy it; and how you treat it. With care, your Poinsettia should retain its beauty for weeks – and some varieties remain attractive for months.

Unwrap your Poinsettia carefully and place it in indirect light. Six hours of light each day is ideal. Place the Poinsettia in a sunny window. Do not let any part of the plant touch a cold window. Keep the Poinsettia away from cold drafts, warm drafts, radiators, heaters, air registers, open doors, or open windows. Poinsettias require a daytime temp of 60-70 degrees F, and nighttime temp of 55-60 degrees F. Extremes of hot or cold will shorten the plant's life. Move the plant to a cooler room at night if necessary. Avoid extreme temperature variations. If the plant is wrapped in foil or paper, remove the wrapping or punch holes at the bottom so water can drain out into a dish, and discard excess water so the dish stays dry. Check the soil daily. Water sparingly, only when soil is dry. Overwatered or under-watered plants drop their bracts sooner.

December 12, 2018

To get your Poinsettia to re-flower, you must keep it in total darkness between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., from October 1 until color shows on the bracts (usually around mid-December). Any exposure to light during the night can prevent re-flowering. Covering the plant with a light-proof bag and placing it in a closet might work. Night temperatures should be lower than 65 degrees F to prevent decay.

If you keep the Poinsettia past the holidays, apply a water-soluble houseplant fertilizer once a month, following package directions. Do not fertilize when the Poinsettia is in bloom. With good care, it should last 6-8 weeks in your home, or longer. When all danger of frost has passed, move your Poinsettia outdoors, in an area with morning light, afternoon shade, and no exposure to rain or wind.

For more in-depth research on Poinsettias, go to <http://extension.illinois.edu/poinsettia/facts.cfm>.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center. The garden is open on the second Saturday of each month, 9:00 a.m. to noon, till April 2019.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.