

Poinsettia – *Euphorbia pulcherrima*

The plants we now know as poinsettias found their way to the United States via the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, in 1828. It didn't take long for the brilliant red and green plants to catch on as house plants. By 1836, they were being cultivated and sold for that purpose.

The famously colorful leaves of poinsettias aren't flowers: they're bracts, which is a botanical term for specialized leaves. The flowers themselves are unassuming little yellow puffs, while the bracts color up brilliantly each season.

Poinsettia Care

Keeping poinsettias beautiful and happy through the holiday season isn't difficult. But when something goes wrong, it's usually for one of these common reasons.

Not Enough Light

While Poinsettias may be understory plants in the tropics, they need as much light as we can give them up here in the Pacific Northwest. It's okay to move them wherever you want them to look temporarily, but they should spend most of their time near a very sunny window if you plan on keeping them past the holiday season.

Temperature is too Low

Remember: these are tropical plants. They don't like temperatures below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and they don't like temperature changes. Even a brief draft can cause them to go downhill quickly. Once they are home, keep them away from any drafty doors, and make sure their foliage doesn't touch the windows.

Too Much Water

One of the most common problems people have with poinsettias is over-watering. Check the soil before you water. When it's dry to the touch, take your plants out of any decorative coverings and water generously. Make sure the pot drains fully before you put them back inside of anything that will prevent drainage. Then wait until the soil dries before watering again.