



## Weed to Wonderful : Poinsettia / *Euphorbia pulcherrima*

*A brief summary of best practices to enjoy this fascinating plant during and beyond the holidays.*

- Protect from temperatures below 50°. Wrap it up to take home or when bringing as a party gift.
- Place it away from warm or cold drafts since uneven temperatures will cause the bracts to droop.
- Give it six hours of bright, indirect sunlight. Bract colors will fade in direct sun.
- Poinsettias do not like to be overwatered. Allow soil to almost dry out before watering again. If you pick up your plant and it feels light, it needs more water.
- Do not allow to sit in water – be sure to drain the cachepot, saucer or foil covering.
- Keep temperatures from 60° - 70° during the day and 55° at night. Cooler night temperatures will help keep the bracts at their most intense color for a longer time.
- No fertilization is necessary unless you are planning to “perennialize” in lieu of composting after the holidays.

### Don't Worry...

- Poinsettias are NOT poisonous – not even highly toxic to humans OR pets.
- However, ingestion may cause drooling, mild vomiting or diarrhea due to the milky sap. If you have chewing kittens or puppies it's best to keep plants out of reach.
- The sap is a skin irritant as well, so protect hands and eyes when pruning or arranging cut flowers.

### How to Bring a Poinsettia Back into Color

- After the holidays keep in a warm (65° - 75°), well-lit place and water when dry from January to March.
- In April let it move to dormancy: decrease water, place in lower light and cooler temperature (60°).
- In mid-May, cut each branch back to about 4”, repot in same sized pot, move to light and warmth, water well and start fertilizing with water-soluble houseplant food every 2 to 4 weeks.
- In June move it outside if desired – best in morning sun/afternoon shade.
- Begin pinching it back by an inch or so every now and then from mid-July to mid-August.
- It will develop into a densely-branched plant. In mid-August bring it back inside to your well-lit place.
- On October 1<sup>st</sup> begin to force the color: Give it 8-10 weeks of at least 14 hours total darkness.
- For example: cover the entire Poinsettia with a box or black plastic bag from 5 pm to 8 am every night.
- Uncover every morning so it will have bright light during the day. Continue with regular care.
- By the end of November, tiny yellow flower buds appear and the bracts will begin to show color.
- Display your re-blooming Poinsettia with pride from Thanksgiving to the New Year!
- Congratulations! You did it! Now you can start again at the top of this list.