



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints

January 2019

Your poinsettias looked beautiful throughout the holiday season, but now what should you do to care for them? First let's talk about the ideal indoor temperature for growing poinsettias, which is between 65 and 70 degrees with slightly cooler temperatures of 60 degrees at night to avoid leaf drop. Your poinsettia can die if temperatures go below 50 degrees for an extended period.

When you purchased your poinsettia, it was ready to look good for several weeks no matter where it was to be displayed. To make it last even longer now, give it as much natural light as you can with at least six hours of bright, indirect sunlight each day, but not in a hot, south facing window.

Overwatering the soil is a common killer of poinsettias. Remove the foil around the container to allow for good drainage. Watering once a week is adequate if you moisten the soil thoroughly and do not wet the foliage.

As poinsettias are blooming but not growing when purchased for the holiday season, fertilizing is not necessary. With proper light, water, and warmth, pests should not be a problem.

As the latex in poinsettias can cause a skin reaction for some people, wear gloves when grooming your plant. All parts of the plant are mildly toxic, so be prudent and keep them away from children and pets.

Continue normal watering until the first of April, and then allow it to dry gradually. If your plant becomes leggy around the middle of April or May, cut the stems back to four inches above the soil and repot in a larger container with fresh potting soil. Water thoroughly and put the plant back in a sunny window. Only water when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch.

After new growth begins, feed your poinsettia every couple of weeks at the recommended rate with an all-purpose fertilizer. In late spring when nighttime temperatures remain above 50 degrees, you can move the plant outdoors to a slightly shady location. Gradually give the plant more light until finally giving it full sun.



Trim your outdoor poinsettia around the first to middle of July by pinching an inch of terminal growth from each stem. Give it another pruning towards the first part of September by trimming off two to three inches to promote side branching, allowing 3 to 4 leaves to remain on each shoot.

Bring your poinsettia in when outdoor temperatures are 55-60 degrees in the fall. Put your poinsettia near a sunny window and continue watering and fertilizing. Begin keeping your poinsettia in complete darkness for 12-14 hours

from the first part of October until Thanksgiving by sticking it in a closet or covering with a large box every evening and returning it to its sunny window in the morning.

By Thanksgiving you should be able to stop the dark period completely by placing the plant in a sunny area for six hours daily. Reduce water and fertilizer. By Christmas your poinsettia should be blooming. There is no guarantee it will bloom even with the best of care, but it's certainly worth a try.

--Sandy