

Poinsettia Care

How to give a keep these stunning holiday icons happy and healthy indoors



At a Glance

Temperature: 65–70°F during the day, 60–65° at night

Light: Bright, indirect

Water: Check daily and water when soil feels dry or pot is light.

Fertilizer: Use an all purpose until the plant is in full color, then reduce to half strength once full color is achieved.

Poinsettias are stocky with dark green foliage, well-formed, richly-colored bracts, and very few open flowers-- golden-yellow clusters located at the center of the bracts. Proper selection will help to ensure a long-lasting plant that you will enjoy throughout the holiday season.

After purchase, the plant must be sleeved for protection as it leaves the warmth of the garden center. Never expose poinsettias to cold temperatures. A chilled plant will begin to drop leaves very quickly. Once inside, carefully remove the protective wrapping from bottom to top.

- **Temperature:** A cool room (65–70F during the day, and 60–65F at night) is ideal. Avoid hot or cold drafts, or excess heat from appliances, fireplaces, radiators, or ventilating ducts.
- **Light:** Very bright, indirect light is essential for proper growth and color retention.
- **Water:** Plants should be checked daily, and watered thoroughly whenever the soil feels dry to the touch, or the pot becomes light. If the plant is wrapped in foil or in a basket, be sure to discard any drainage that collects.
- **Fertilizer:** Plants should be fertilized with a well-balanced, all-purpose fertilizer until the poinsettia is in full color. Once in full color, reduce fertilizing to half strength once every 3 to 4 times that you water.

Reblooming your Poinsettia

If you have a gardener's green thumb, you may want to try your hand at re-flowering your poinsettia next year. If you follow these directions very carefully, it is possible to have your poinsettia in flower by Christmas.

Poinsettia Cycle

- **Late March to early April:** Color fades; keep near a sunny window. Cut stems back to about 8". Water as needed, and fertilize with well-balanced, all-purpose fertilizer. Around May, you should see new growth
- **June 1st:** Re-pot if necessary in a well-drained potting mix. You can put your plant outside if you like, as long as night temperatures are consistently above 55 F, and it is protected from the hot sun
- **July-August:** Pruning may be required to keep your plant compact and bushy; do not prune after September 1st
- **Starting October 1st:** Provide complete and continuous darkness for 12–14 hours a night, combined with

6-8 hours of bright light a day. During the night, stray light of any kind (streetlights, household lamps, etc.) may delay or halt the re-flowering process

- **Note:** The key to success is to follow strict light-dark requirements very carefully. Once your poinsettia is in full color, stop fertilizing until it loses its color and the cycle starts again in March.

Poinsettia Facts

- The botanical name is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, meaning “the most beautiful *Euphorbia*”.
- The United States’ first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Robert Poinsett, sent several plants back to his home in Greenville, SC in 1825. His last name is the source of the plant’s common name.
- Plants should be kept out of reach of small children and pets, as some toxicity is evident when a large enough quantity is consumed.
- Poinsettias have been added to a list of plants known to remove pollutants from the air.