

Poinsettia Care After Christmas

Did you receive a poinsettia for Christmas? If you did you received the most popular Christmas plant given. When we lived in Africa poinsettias grew outside in our yard as a shrub. It's only here in the U.S. that we treat these plants as a single season plant. For those of you who want to keep your poinsettia to see if you can get it to flower again here is some information that might help you do that.

If you obtain a poinsettia for your home, place it near a sunny window where it will have the most available sunlight. A window that faces south, east or west is better than one facing north. Do not let any part of the plant touch the cold windowpane because this may injure it.

Temperature - To keep the plant in bloom, maintain it at a temperature of 65 to 70 degrees F during the daylight hours and, if possible, move it to a cooler place at night. Because root rot disease is more prevalent at temperatures below 60 degrees F, do not put the poinsettia in a room colder than this. Avoid exposing the plant to hot or cold drafts, which may cause premature leaf drop.

Reflowering - Poinsettias can be reflowered the following Christmas, but unless a yearlong schedule of care is observed, the results usually are not good. For such a schedule, continue normal watering of the soil until the first of April, then allow it to dry gradually. Do not let it get so dry at any time that the stems shrivel. Following the drying period, store the plant in a cool (60 degrees F), airy location on its side or upright.

In the middle of May, cut the stems back to about 4 inches above the soil, and either replant in a pot 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter or shake old soil off the roots and repot in the same container, using a new soilless mix. Many good commercial potting mixes are available. Choose one that is not very finely textured. Using soil from the garden can introduce disease to the plant. Water the soil thoroughly after potting; wait five minutes and water again. Then put the plant near the window that is exposed to the most sunlight. Keep the plant at a temperature of 65 to 75 degrees F, and water when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch. After new growth appears, fertilize every two weeks with a complete-analysis, water soluble fertilizer at the rate recommended on the label for flowering plants.

In early June, leave the plant in the pot, move it outdoors, and place it in a lightly shaded location. Continue watering and fertilizing the plant while it is outdoors. Pinch each stem (remove 1 inch of terminal growth) in early July. Then, between August 15 and September 1, cut or pinch the new stems back, allowing three or four leaves to remain on each shoot. After this second pinch, bring the plant indoors and again place it near a window with a sunny exposure. If the plant is not pinched, it will grow too tall and be unsightly. Keep the plant at a temperature of 65 to 70 degrees F at night and continue watering and fertilizing.

Poinsettias are short-day plants, which means they flower about 10 weeks after the daylight shortens to about 12 hours or less. Therefore, to have the plant in full flower by Christmas, keep it in complete darkness between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. from the first part of October until Thanksgiving. During this period, any kind of light exposure between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. will delay flowering. A closet, opaque box or opaque cloth will keep the plant in darkness during those hours. Remember to put the plant near a sunny window in the daytime. Continue fertilizing the plant until mid-December.

Various reports over the years have led the general public to believe poinsettias are toxic to humans; however, this has not been authenticated. Research conducted at The Ohio State University and other institutions has proved the old wives' tale that poinsettias are poisonous to be false.

Farming for the Future Conference

The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) will hold their 2010 Farming for the Future Conference February 4 – 6, 2010 at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College, PA. The 2010 Theme is The Sustainable Challenge: Providing for a Livable Tomorrow. For more information on the conference go to <http://www.pasafarming.org/conference2010>

2010 Aquaculture Forum

The 2010 Aquaculture Forum will be held jointly with organizations from four states – West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan on January 16, 2010 at the Memorial Student Center at Marshall University Campus, Huntington, WV. The Forum will be preceded by a field trip on Friday, January 15 to the Ohio Center for Aquaculture Research and Development (OCARD) in Piketon, Ohio. There is a \$10 registration fee to attend Saturday's meeting to cover the cost of the meal. Advanced registration for the tour to the Ohio Center for Aquaculture Research and Development is required. There is no charge for the tour just preregister. For more information and details see the aquaculture extension web site at <http://aquaculture.ext.wvu.edu/> Any additional questions relating to this program should be addressed with Ken Semmens, WVU Aquaculture Specialist, at 304-293-6131 x 4211 or via email at Ken.Semmens@mail.wvu.edu

Berkeley County Extension Service Committee

The Berkeley County Extension Service Committee will hold their semi-annual meeting on Monday, January 25, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. at the Berkeley County Extension Office. This meeting is open to the public.

Gardening 101 Program

The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association will be conducting a free gardening seminar on Saturday, March 13, 2010 from 9:00 AM until 2:30 PM at the Berkeley County Youth Fairgrounds. Participant check-in begins at 8:30 AM.

The seminar, called Gardening 101, will cover the following topics:

- Setting up a Garden
- Seed Choices
- Starting Plants from Seeds
- Container Gardening
- Pests and Weeds
- Composting
- Rain Barrels

Participants are asked to bring a brown bag lunch. The Master Gardener Association will provide drinks and desserts. For more information or to register for Gardening 101, please contact the Berkeley County Extension Service office at (304) 264-1936 or go to <http://www.berkeleyextension.com>

Garden Tips

- Plan your 2010 garden layout and read seed catalogs and order seeds for the best selection
- Service power equipment
- Gently remove snow and ice from evergreens and shrubs
- Be careful if you use salt or other chemicals on sidewalks since it may harm plants and pets
- Pick up your 2010 WVU Garden calendars at the local Extension Office or one of the following locations, Boltz's Hardware, Tractor Supply, Orr's Farm Market, Petrucci Farm Market, USDA Farm Service Agency, Martinsburg Library or Arden Equipment

Until next time...Happy Gardening, and Farming!

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