



Poinsettia after Christmas Care

Happy New Year! I do hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday season. Now that we have taken down all of our Christmas trees and decorations, I have observed some of my neighbors throwing away their poinsettias. Poinsettias are very popular in many American homes during the Christmas season. With a little care Poinsettias can re-flower by the following Christmas season. It is vital to establish a yearlong schedule of care, or the results will not be good. Instead of throwing them out, why not take care of them year round?

Continue watering of the soil until the first of April, and then allow it to dry gradually. If the stem starts to shrivel, that means the soil is getting too dry. After the drying period, store the plant in a cool (60 degrees F), airy location on its side or upright.

During the middle of May, cut the stems back to about four inches above the soil and either replant in a larger pot or shake old soil off the roots and re-pot in the same container using a soil-less mix. You can also use a good commercial potting mix. Water the soil thoroughly after potting, wait five minutes and water again. After watering, place the poinsettia near a window that is exposed to the most sunlight. Keep the plant at a temperature of 65 to 75 degrees F, and water when the soil is dry to the touch. After the appearance of new growth, fertilize every two weeks with a complete water soluble fertilizer.

In early June, move the plant outdoors and place it in a lightly shaded location. Continue to water and fertilize the plant while it is outdoors. Remove 1 inch of the terminal growth in early July. Between August 15 and September 1st, cut or pinch the new stems back, allowing three or four leaves to remain on each shoot. Bring the plant back indoors and again place it near a window with a sunny exposure. Again, keep the plant at a temperature of 65 to 70 degrees F at night and continue watering and fertilizing.

In order to have the plant in full flower by Christmas, keep it in complete darkness between 5 pm and 8 am from the first of October until Thanksgiving. Remember that poinsettias are short-day plants which means they flower about 10 weeks after the day shortens to about 12 hours or less. A closet will keep the plant in darkness during the recommended hours. Be sure to put the plant near a sunny window in the daytime. Continue to water and fertilize the plant until mid-December.

I know that this sounds like a lot of work but it will be well worth it. It will be your own labor of love for the holiday season.

Remember to look for places that will recycle your live Christmas tree. There is a drop-off for live Christmas trees near the recycling bins on the grounds at Agricenter International (7777 Walnut Grove Rd.). Be sure to take advantage of this opportunity. Until next time, happy gardening!



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