



## Proper Poinsettia Care

Poinsettias are a plant native to Mexico, but were introduced to the United States by the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett. In climates without the harsh winters that we have in Oklahoma, such as Florida and California, they can be grown in the landscape.

An interesting thing about poinsettias is that oftentimes the red part of the plant is considered the flower. However, those are actually specialized leaves called bracts. The flower is the yellow part surrounded by the colorful bracts. Poinsettias with red bracts are typically the most popular, but plants are available with yellow, orange, pink, white, and variegated bracts.

Temperatures of between 60 and 70 degrees are most favorable for your plant. Avoid cold drafts or excessive heat from your heating system. And, keep the plant away from windows, as the cold glass could damage your plant.

Light is important, so place your plant in a place where it will receive at least 6-8 hours of light per day.

Moisture for your plant is also important and you can assess moisture by feeling the growing medium or using a water moisture meter. Water the top when it starts to feel dry. Slight wilting is not problematic, but do not allow the plant to dry out completely, as this will accelerate bract drop.

Do not water when the growing medium is already wet as this will encourage root rot and tend to suffocate the plant. Yellow and dropping leaves may lead you to believe the plant is dry and needs water, but check the growing medium as symptoms

of overwatering can sometime appear to be caused by lack of water.

Oftentimes, people will ask us if they can somehow save their poinsettias to have another beautiful plant the following year. The simple answer is "yes", but the process comes with a set of challenges.

If you do decide to give it a shot, after placing it outside in the spring, in September you will need to bring the plant indoors and begin a fairly stringent regimen of forcing the plants to bloom. This schedule includes leaving the plants in a sunny window during the day but putting them in complete darkness each evening. This daily procedure will need to be repeated each day from September through Thanksgiving to give you good bract color. For more information on caring for your poinsettias and more details on maintaining them throughout the year, an informative fact sheet can be obtained from the OSU Extension Office, the Tulsa Master Gardeners website or by simply clicking on [HLA-6413](#), which can then be printed out if/as desired.

Whether you want to attempt to re-flower your existing poinsettia or just purchase a new one next year, poinsettias are a colorful part of the American Christmas tradition.