

How to Rebloom Your Poinsettia

The poinsettia, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, is the most recognized of all holiday flowers. The small flowers are found in the center of the “bracts.” The bracts, or leaf-like structures, produce the showy colors of reds, whites, pinks, yellows and combinations of that we are so attracted to.

Poinsettias can be difficult to maintain in most homes. They require full sun locations during the day and night temperatures of 60°F. The leaves turn yellow quickly and flower buds die if the temperature is too high or light intensity too low. Inadequate moisture also produces adverse effects. Most people consider them a short-term plant for the home. Others try their hand at carrying them over from season to season.

If you're adventurous, read on as to how you can rebloom your poinsettia. For all others, visit your local garden center next December.

Tips for reblooming pointsettias

1. Plants that are going to be carried over should be allowed to flower and kept in as good condition as possible before they are dried.

2. After the plants finish flowering, allow them to dry out to encourage dormancy. Then place the potted plants on their sides in a cool, dry cellar until April. The drying should not be so severe as to permit shriveling of the woody stems.

3. Remove the plants from storage in April bring them into the sunlight and keep them watered. Do not allow them to dry out once they have started to grow, but don't over-water them, either. Prune two or three inches from the end of each stem.

4. The plants should be carried through the summer, either inside or outside, and feed them with a complete fertilizer such as 20-20-20 about once a month. If they are put outside they can be plunged into the soil while in the pot.

5. As fall approaches (September 1) and night temperatures start to go below 65° F, the plants should be moved indoors.

6. Check plants for insects before bringing them indoors.

7. Place the plants in a sunny location in the house with a night temperature of about 65°F and a day temperature of 70-75°F. Keep moist and feed weekly with a 20-20-20 fertilizer (1 tsp./gallon).

8. Poinsettias form flower buds when the days are shorter than 12 hours. Beginning October 1, give the plants full sunlight during the day. Protect the plants from light every night by placing them in a dark closet between 5 pm and 8 am. Exposure to artificial light will inhibit flowering; keep them in total darkness. After 40 days of this treatment (as slight coloration begins) the plants can be kept in a normally lighted room.

9. Continue to fertilize with the 20-20-20 water-soluble fertilizer.

10. Enjoy your poinsettias for a second holiday season!

