



## History of the Poinsettia

Poinsettia is a succulent wildflower native to Mexico. The botanical name is *Euphorbia pulcherrima* (Yu-for'-be-a pul-ker-e-ma). The name 'poinsettia' comes from Joel Robert Poinsettia of the United States, Ambassador to Mexico during the 19th century. The red "flowers" are actually bracts (modified leaves). The actual flowers are the small yellow and red bud-like structures found in the center of each cluster of the bracts.

## Picking the perfect poinsettia

Around Thanksgiving is the best time to purchase your poinsettia. Select your plant from a local nursery that specializes in plant sales. Look for a plant with dark green leaves, bright colored bracts (this is the red, pink or white part of the poinsettia). Also it is important to note the temperature of where the grower has displayed the plant.

## Caring for you poinsettia

1. When transporting your poinsettia enclose completely in plastic or paper to protect your plant against temperature change.
2. Once you get your poinsettia home keep it away from warm or cold drafts, heater vents, open doors and windows. The cooler the building or house and the higher the humidity, the longer the color will last.
3. Since poinsettia is a tropical plant it should be kept in a room between 55 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. High temperatures will shorten the plant's life. Poinsettias thrive in natural light.
4. Check the surface of the soil twice a week. When the soil is dry an inch down soak thoroughly. Only allow plant sit in about an inch of water, if more drain off.
5. Fertilize the poinsettia if you keep it past the holiday season. You can apply fertilizer once a month. When in bloom there is no need to fertilize.
6. Poinsettias are very sensitive to bruising, so keep them out of high traffic areas. Avoid touching the milky sap, keep away from your eyes and face while handling the plant. Wash hands after touching the plant. The sap may cause a rash on people with sensitive skin and a burning sensation in the eyes. Place the plant out of the reach of small children and animals.