

THE POINSETTIA

Poinsettia History

An enchanting legend of the poinsettia dates back to a Christmas Eve several centuries ago in its native Mexico. Pepita had no gift for the Christ child. Her cousin Pedro urged her to give a humble gift. On her way to church, Pepita gathered some weeds. As she approached the altar, a miracle happened: The weeds blossomed into brilliant flowers. Then they were called Flores de Noche Buena — Flowers of the Holy Night. Now they are called poinsettias.

Joel Robert Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, is credited with bringing poinsettias to the U.S. in 1825. December 12 is National Poinsettia Day, an official day set aside to enjoy this symbol of holiday cheer.

Poinsettia Care Tips

Poinsettias are one of the longest-lasting blooming plants available. To choose the perfect poinsettia and keep it blooming, follow these care tips:

- Pick a plant with small, tightly clustered buds in the center.
- Look for crisp, bright, undamaged foliage.
- When surface soil is dry to the touch, water thoroughly. Discard excess water in the saucer.
- To prolong color, keep a temperature range of 60 degrees for night and 72 degrees for day. High humidity is preferable.
- Place plant away from hot or cold drafts, and protect from cold winds.

The Poinsettia is NOT Poisonous

The poinsettia is the most widely tested consumer plant on the market today, proving the myth about the popular holiday plant to be false:

- Scientific research from The Ohio State University has proved the poinsettia to be non-toxic. All parts of the plant were tested, including the leaves and sap.

- According to POISINDEX, the national information center for poison control centers, a child would have to ingest 500-600 leaves in order to exceed the experimental doses that found no toxicity.

As with any non-food product, the poinsettia is not meant to be eaten and can cause varying degrees of discomfort. Therefore, the plant should be kept out of the reach of young children and curious pets.

Poinsettia and Latex Allergies

Concerns of latex issues are unfounded. According to the American Latex Allergy Association, only about 1 percent to 6 percent of the general population is allergic to latex, and "... one would have to have significant contact with the poinsettia plant's latex directly to have an allergic reaction ... only a small drop of latex that can be immediately wiped off of the skin is unlikely to cause an allergic reaction."



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