

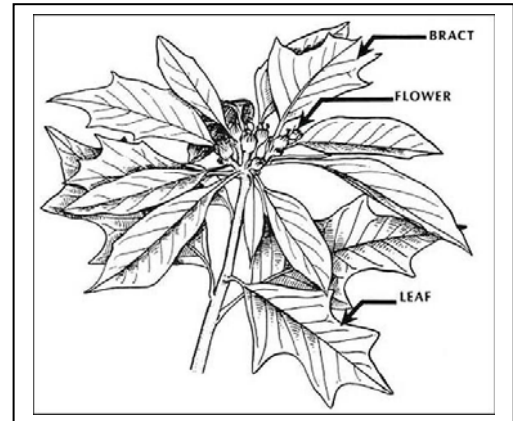
## Poinsettias for Florida

The poinsettia, *Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd., is a member of the Euphorbiaceae or spurge family.

### Poinsettias Are *Not* Poisonous!

### Care of Poinsettias in the Home

- **Location** - Keep plants in a warm location free of drafts and chilling. Bright light is always best, but avoid placing plants in extremely sunny, hot, and dry situations.
- **Watering** - Water your poinsettia when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch. Remove any excess water from the saucer beneath the plant as Poinsettias do not like to have soggy soil. Most people kill their poinsettias with too much water. Remember this plant came from the tropical desert and is more tolerant of dry conditions than of wet.
- **Humidity** - Poinsettias like a little bit higher humidity than the average household but will do fine in most situations without additional humidity. Misting plants or placing them on gravel trays will prolong the color and life of the poinsettia.
- **Fertilization** - It is not necessary to fertilize your poinsettia during the holiday season. In fact, high levels of fertilizer will reduce the quality of the plant.



### After the Holidays

- Throughout the winter, keep the plant somewhat dry and do not fertilize until the weather warms in spring.
- After the weather has begun to warm, cut off the fading bracts, leaving 4-6 inches of the stem on each branch.
- Begin fertilizing with a well-balanced fertilizer.
- Move the plant outdoors to a partly shady situation.
- Eventually you'll want to place your poinsettia in a full-sun location, but give the plant a week or two to adjust to both temperatures and brighter light levels before doing so.

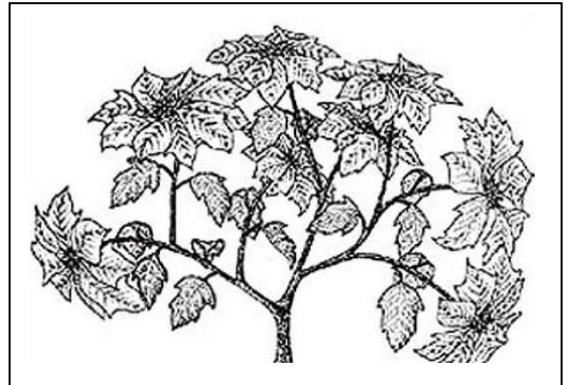
## Selecting a Planting Site

They should be planted in areas where they receive full sun most of the day. However, it is essential that they receive **no** light at night (no street light or window light) during the bud-setting period. Normally, they set flower buds in early October when nights are becoming increasingly longer.

Poinsettias grow best in moist, well drained, fertile soils (not wet sites). Soil pH should ideally range from 5.5 to 6.5, but it need not be adjusted if between 5.0 and 7.0.

## Planting

Christmas poinsettia can be removed from its container and planted outdoors as soon as danger of frost is past. Backfill the hole with enough soil so the plant will sit in the hole at the same depth as it was growing in the container. Water thoroughly while planting to remove air pockets. Mulch around plant with organic materials to conserve moisture and help control weeds.



## General Care

### Fertilization

Plants should be fertilized monthly, starting in May in north Florida, with 2 pounds (1 kg) of 18-6-12, or an equivalent amount of another complete fertilizer, per 100 square feet (10 m<sup>2</sup>) of planting area. Continue monthly applications of the fertilizer until September in north Florida.

### Watering

Water relations are a crucial consideration for growing poinsettias, since prolonged dryness will result in the loss of lower leaves. The soil should be kept moderately moist, but never wet, at all times.

### Pruning

Poinsettias should be pruned in early spring after blooming is over and the danger of frost has passed. They should be cut back to within 12 to 18 inches (30.5 to 45.7 cm) of the ground unless they have been frozen below this point, in which event they should be cut back to "live" wood.

Pinching the plant during growing season will result in a compact plant at flowering time. After four weeks or when it is 12 inches (30.5 cm) long, new growth should be cut back, leaving four leaves on each shoot. This procedure should be repeated every time the new growth develops until about September 10. New growth after the last pinch will usually grow to a length of 8 to 10 inches (20.3 to 25.4 cm) and, in the first week of October, will initiate flower buds.

Adapted from a University of Florida publication, "Poinsettias For Florida, Indoors and Outdoors" by Robert J. Black, Rick K.Schoellhorn.