



5518 Liberty Grove Rd.
Rowlett, TX 75089
(972) 475-5888
www.covingtonnursery.com

What You Should Know - Poinsettias

Poinsettias are one of our most beloved houseplants around Christmas-time, but proper poinsettia care is a mystery to many folks. In the quest to help you keep a beautiful plant, this What You Should Know is all about them!

Poinsettias Are NOT poisonous.

There's the perception in popular culture that poinsettias are poisonous, and that folks with small children should not keep them around. This is, simply, not true. They might not taste good, but the most a child eating a poinsettia leaf should expect is an upset tummy. In animal toxicity tests, animals fed the equivalent of FIVE HUNDRED leaves (for a 50-lb child!) were just fine.

How do I keep my poinsettia looking good?

Poinsettias like a moderate amount of light, so place them in bright indirect light in your home or office.

Poinsettias are sensitive to cold drafts. Don't place them near a door, window, or in any cold area. When purchasing poinsettias on a cold day, make sure to take them straight home and don't let them become chilled. Temperatures below 55 degrees aren't good for them.

Poinsettias like to stay right in the middle range of soil moisture - neither drenched nor bone dry. Poinsettias are often sold in decorative foil hats over their soil containers. To eliminate the risk of having your poinsettia sit in water and become saturated, take the plant out of the foil hat to water it, and then allow the plant to finish dripping before returning it to the hat. You could also cut holes in the bottom of the foil to let water drain out if you are keeping the plant in a saucer. Foil hats are nice for giving the plants as gifts (they keep water off your furniture), but aren't suitable as long term saucers for your plants.

How do I keep my poinsettia from year to year and make it re-bloom?

Once the holidays are over, if you'd like to see how you do maintaining the plant until next year's bloom, keep the plant indoors in bright, indirect light until warmer temperatures roll around. Once the night temperatures stay consistently above 55 degrees, move your plant outside, and transplant it into a larger pot with our Covington's potting soil. In late March, cut the poinsettia back sharply, to roughly 8 inches tall. You'll see vigorous new growth by early May. Prune the poinsettia occasionally to keep it bushy and full, and keep the plant in a location with bright indirect light (no direct sun). Fertilize the plant every two weeks from the moment you cut it back with a 20-20-20 water soluble fertilizer.

In early October comes the complicated part! Poinsettias require 14 hours of darkness - we're talking total darkness - to set a bloom. From October 1 on, put your poinsettia outside in the normal spot for exactly ten hours a day, then put it inside a dark closet for the other 14 hours. Greenhouse growers spend a lot of time doing this with enormous sheets of blackout plastic! Be sure to move your Poinsettia back indoors when outside temperatures begin to dip close to 55 degrees.

Do this every single day for ten weeks and you'll have blooms for Christmas!