

POTTED POINSETTIAS



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OBJECTIVE(S):

Educational Components

Each participant will be presented with information about the poinsettia, a common safety misconception, its growth and its maintenance.

Activity (What are the patients going to do in your presentation workshop?) Each individual will be provided the opportunity to transplant a poinsettia into a container.

LESSON PLAN: POTTED POINSETTIAS

OBJECTIVES *(Continued)*

Take Away (What things are patients taking back with them?) Each individual will take a transplanted poinsettia in a container with them back to their room after the activity.

MATERIALS:

(Plan for 8-10 patients. Eight is supposed to be the maximum, but sometimes we get 10.)

- _____ Pens
- _____ Markers
- _____ Dishpans for dirt (available in BRI supply cabinet)
- _____ Watering cans (2 available in BRI supply cabinet) or individual water bottles for patients to use
- _____ Name tags for patients (check BRI supply cabinet)
- _____ Example of completed project you're doing
- _____ An extra set of the patient project materials listed below in order for you to demonstrate the project
- _____ TWO completed presentation forms (1 to BRI and 1 mailed to Ext. office)
- _____ Your clean receipts for materials purchased (give to BRI therapists)

ITEMS SPECIFIC TO THIS PROJECT:

- Poinsettia plants
- Optional, other filler plants for container
- Containers
- Optional, saucers for containers
- Soil
- Water
- Optional-decorations for the pot
-

IS A POWERPOINT OR PREZI OF PRESENTATION AVAILABLE? NO

HANDOUT: *"How to Care for Poinsettias"*

BEFORE CLASS:

When shopping for a poinsettia, look for healthy dark green foliage all the way down to the soil line, and examine the true flowers located at the base of the bright colored bracts; if these are green or red tipped and fresh, the plant will last longer than if they are covered with a yellow pollen. Avoid any plant whose leaves are drooping, wilted, yellowing, or falling.

DURING CLASS:

Transplanting Your Poinsettia

1. Remove the plant from its pot and loosen the roots gently.
 2. Plant your poinsettia at the same depth it was growing in its previous container.
 3. *Optional - Plant other filler plants.*
- (MORE, Continued)

LESSON PLAN: POTTED POINSETTIAS

DURING CLASS *(Continued)*

4. Firm the soil around the roots and water it well.
5. If you are using a saucer under the container, empty any standing water to prevent root rot.

MAINTENANCE: Included in handout below

Keep poinsettias between 68-70 degrees. Never expose leaves to temperatures below 50 degrees.

Check the soil daily and water as soon as the soil feels dry. Be sure to empty any water that collects in the saucer.

Place poinsettias where they will get as much bright light as possible, but never in direct sun. If your plant is close to a south-facing window, use sheer curtains to filter the sun's rays. Also avoid placing the plant in drafty locations, near a door or heating grate, for example.

Do not fertilize while in bloom.

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS:

With more than 2 million sold each year during the holidays, the poinsettia is the number one plant for the holidays—it can be found in grocery stores, discount stores, and even on street corners. There are more than 100 varieties. It can be found in pink, white, and yellow, even in solids, streaked, marbled, and multicolored, although the most common is simply a solid red. Some have even been treated with dyes, painted, or sprayed with glitter.

History

The poinsettia is a tropical shrub native to southern Mexico where it grows up to 10 feet tall. The colored “flowers” are actually specialized leaves called bracts, while the true flowers are inconspicuous beads found in the center of the bracts. The ancient Aztecs (Mexican Indians) prized the Poinsettia as a symbol of purity. Centuries later, Mexico's early Christians adopted the Poinsettia as their prized Christmas Eve flower. A Mexican legend explains how Poinsettias became associated with Christmas. Apparently a child who could not afford a gift to offer to Christ on Christmas Eve picked some weeds from the side of a road. The child was told that a humble gift, if given in love would be acceptable in God's eyes. When brought into the church, the weeds bloomed into red and green flowers and the congregation felt that they had witnessed a Christmas miracle. **Joel Poinsett**, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, was so impressed by the beauty of these plants that he sent cuttings back to his home in South Carolina in 1828. Soon the plants became popular across the U.S. and were named for him. For over 150 years, December 12 was considered National Poinsettia Day to honor the day of Poinsett's death in 1851. In 2002 an Act of Congress made it official.

LESSON PLAN: POTTED POINSETTIAS

ARE POINSETTIAS POISONOUS?

Research has proven that poinsettias are not poisonous. Years ago, researchers at Ohio State University fed huge quantities of poinsettia parts to rats with no ill effects. To replicate their test, a 50-pound child would have to eat 500 leaves.

That said, people with latex allergies can be sensitive to the milky sap and should be careful when handling the plants to avoid a rash. It's still best not to have animals or children eating plants; the sap can cause an upset tummy and irritate the skin. Keep plants out of reach.

The USDA reports that it has no evidence of anyone dying from eating poinsettias. On a related note, holly and mistletoe *are* toxic to children and pets. They will induce vomiting and diarrhea—and can even be fatal in large quantities.

SOURCES:

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Source unknown. (n.d.) Poinsettia.

HOW TO CARE FOR POINSETTIAS

- To get off to a good start, protect your new plant from cold temperatures and chilling winds on the way home from the hospital. This is a tropical plant, so don't leave it in a cold car while you run other errands.
- At home, place it near a sunny window where it will get bright, indirect light for at least 6 hours a day. Keep it out of direct sun though, which could fade the leaves. Avoid drafts.
- To help keep temperatures between 65 and 70 degrees, don't put it on top of the T.V. and don't let the leaves touch the glass. They prefer indoor temperatures of 50-60 degrees at night, this will help it last even longer.
- Overwatering is a common cause of death, so keep the plant evenly moist, watering only when the soil is dry to the touch and don't let the plant sit in water. No fertilizer is needed while the plant is in bloom.

If you want to try to keep it going after the holidays (not recommended by most gardeners) when the colorful bracts start to fall, move the plant to a location where the temperature can be kept at above 55 degrees. Keep the soil just barely moist. When all danger of frost is passed, cut off the top of the plant to promote branching and sink the pot up to its rim outdoors, preferably where it will receive morning light. Keep it outdoors, not letting it dry out, until about September 1st. Then bring it back indoors, place it in full sunlight, and keep it evenly moist. Don't fret if the plant drops some foliage. Starting on October 1st, keep the plant in a cool, dark place for at least 12 hours each night, making sure no light hits it. Any exposure can prevent flowering. Keep the dark consistent—for example between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. In November, move it back into the sunlight. It might reward you with color again.