



Poinsettia Care



In Mexico they speak of a peasant girl called Pepita whose family were so poor and had nothing to offer the Christ Child at the Christmas Eve mass but a posy of leaves and grasses that she had gathered.

They say that some in the congregation snickered as the child laid her posy on the alter, but she believed that God accepts any gift given with love. She was rewarded by a miracle – her humble weeds changed into scarlet flowers of such beauty that they outshone the other offerings. To this day the flower is known in Latin America as *la flor de Noche Buena*, the flower of the Holy Night.

The Aztecs, who used the plant's milky sap in the treatment of fevers, had called it *cuetlaxochitl*, the flower of the short days. We call it the Poinsettia, in honour of Joel Roberts Poinsett, the 1st United States Minister to Mexico, who introduced it to the United States in 1825.

Along with holly and mistletoe, the Poinsettia is now part of the Christmas tradition around the world. *

Environment

- Prefer indirect, natural daylight – 8hrs a day
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight, as this may fade the bract colour.

Watering

- Water thoroughly when the soil feels dry to touch.
- Remove the plant from decorative pots or covers and saturate the soil. Avoid water contact with the leaves.
- Do not allow to sit in water, as this could cause root rot or leaf drop... or the death of the plant!

Maintenance

- Prune as desired once the bracts age and lose their colour to promote new growth.
- Fertilise once the bracts have faded to maintain rich green foliage throughout the year.
- Poinsettias will re flower naturally during Aug / Sep. To delay the blooms, give plants 6 – 8 hrs of bright indirect light a day and complete darkness for 13 continuous hours each night for 8 – 10 weeks prior to Christmas.