

*Wm. Wheat & Son*

THE FLOWER & GARDEN CENTRE

520 Chester Road, Little Aston.

0121 353 7123 / 4090

**Gardeners Guide to:**

## **Poinsettia**

### **How to make your Poinsettia bloom next Christmas**

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Poinsettias when their showy red bracts give that seasonal feel to a room. The Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a native of Mexico discovered in the 1820's by an American diplomat named Joel Poinsett, hence the name. They like a Bright sunny Position with a minimum temperature of 55 oF away from direct heat and high humidity, so not too near a radiator and occasional misting is required. It is important that the plant is not over watered as this is the most common cause of difficulty, make sure the compost dries out between waterings, water sparingly and if in doubt feel the weight of the pot - if it's heavy it doesn't need watering.



The flowers are short lived and are actually little yellow pips in the middle of the red leaves (bracts) that the plant has adapted to bring attention to them. The bracts however are much more robust and can be around well into the summer with proper care.

As the weeks go by the poinsettia leaves will yellow and start to fall off, this is quite natural so reduce the watering and allow the plant to rest with the compost almost drying out. Early leaf drop is a sign of stress due to too much or too little water, too dark or too warm - high temperatures will shorten the life of the plant. With the leaves gone, cut back each of the side branches to within 4" of the main stem, then in June re pot the plant into fresh compost. Water and stand the pot in a cool bright room and it will soon start to grow again. Feed regularly as poinsettias are hungry plants.

Flowers (and bracts) are produced in response to the shortening days so it is important that your plant knows the day length. The best way to get your poinsettia into flower again is to put it into a room that doesn't have artificial light lengthening the day, for example a spare bedroom, warm porch or conservatory from the second week in September. Alternatively the plant may be given blackout treatment by being covered in the evening using a large cardboard box or by being put in a cupboard and uncovered in the morning. The main thing is that the plant needs a 14 hour night for bud initiation.

By the end of November the bracts should be starting to colour. Move the plant into a warm room with temperatures up to 70° F to intensify the size and brightness of the bracts ready for Christmas.

And if all this seems too much to do don't forget we have thousands of top quality plants ready for sale from the first week in December . . . . . HAPPY CHRISTMAS!