

## **Poinsettias Are Not Poisonous!**

The "old wives' tale" that poinsettias are poisonous is simply not true. The Society of American Florists and Ohio State University conducted a scientific investigation disproving the charge that poinsettias are harmful. In fact, the Poisindex® Information Service states that over 500 leaves ingested by a 50-pound child would demonstrate no toxicity. Of course, like all ornamental plants, the poinsettia is not intended for human consumption. (And who has room for a poinsettia after all the other holiday goodies!)

Poinsettias can be used in such a variety of ways, they always make a wonderful gift. You never have to worry if the recipient already has one, since poinsettias look best displayed in groups. From a centerpiece on your holiday table to a miniature decorating the corner of an office desk, to a colorful hanging basket that can brighten any room, the poinsettia is always a perfect fit. Give one as a gift this Winter Holiday!

## **Selecting a Healthy Poinsettia**

Choose plants with thoroughly colored and expanded bracts. The bracts are the colorful part of the poinsettia, while the true flowers are the small yellow centers. Look for plants with dense, plentiful foliage all the way to the soil line. The plant should be about 2x times larger than its pot size. Select plants with strong, stiff stems and no signs of wilting. Be wary of plants displayed in paper, plastic or mesh sleeves, for these can reduce air flow.

## **After the Holidays**

With proper care, your poinsettia can last long past the holiday season. Here's how:

By early April, when the colored bracts begin to turn or fall, cut the plant back leaving four to six buds. Keep the plant near a sunny window, water and fertilize regularly, and by the end of May, you should see vigorous new growth. Cut your plant back again around July 4th and again by Labor Day to promote compact, full growth. Continue to nurture your plant as Autumn nears.

The Poinsettia begins to set buds and produce flowers as the nights become longer. Beginning October 1, keep the plant in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night by moving plants into a dark room or placing a large box over them. During the day, allow six to eight hours of bright sunlight. Continue this for eight to ten weeks, and your plants will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms!