

## **HOW TO EXTEND THE LIFE OF YOUR POINSETTIA**

The poinsettia is often called the Christmas Plant because it displays its vivid red colours over the Christmas season. But now that Christmas is over, your poinsettia can continue to brighten up your home for many months. Here are some tips for choosing and caring for poinsettias.

Today's poinsettias are available in a wide range of reds, pinks, whites and numerous combinations of these. Choose a plant that has rich green leaves and be sure that the little yellow flower cluster is present at the very centre of the plant. (The colourful red bracts are not flowers, but leaves.) Be sure the plant is well wrapped before taking it outside in winter ? poinsettias are easily damaged by cold.

Once you get your poinsettia home, remove the wrapping. You can leave the decorative cellophane wrapper if you wish. Some leaves on the lower branches may yellow and even drop, but this will not affect the plant's overall health. Make some cuts in the bottom of the wrapper to allow water to drain. Alternatively, remove all wrapping and place the plant in a decorative container.

With proper care, your poinsettia will continue to look attractive for months to come. Follow these guidelines to keep your plant fresh and healthy:

**LIGHT ?** Place the poinsettia in a spot with bright natural light but NOT in direct sunlight. It can tolerate up to two hours of sun a day, but more than that will shorten the life of your plant.

**WATER ?** Don't let the soil dry out. The soil should always be moist, but not wet, so good drainage is very important. Place the container in a saucer or other waterproof container to catch any overflow.

**TEMPERATURE ?** Your poinsettia will last longer in a cool location ? not more than 24C (75F) during the day, and 18C (65F) at night. Never expose the plant to drafts from an open door, heating duct or fireplace.