

January 2001

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.

The above information kindly provided by White Rose. They are having a Plant Fest Info session during January and February.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends of the Farm

All events take place in Building 72 at the Experimental Farm off Prince of Wales Drive.

Call 230-3276 for more information about any of these events.

January 17 – Landscaping, by Polly McCall, 7-9 p.m.

February 7 – Environmental Gardening, by Gillian Boyd, 1-3 p.m.

March 21 – Trees in Winter, by a dendrologist, 7-9 p.m.

Dried flower arrangement classes, by Rose Segretto. February 14 to March 7.

Art classes, by Janet Agulnek. January 18 to March 10.

Greely Winter Carnival – January 23 to 28

Indoor and outdoor activities each day.

All events take place at the Greely Community Centre.

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

Manotick Horticultural Society meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 8:00 p.m. at Tomkins Hall, St. John's Anglican Church, Manotick.

Osgoode Gardening Group meets 3rd Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at Osgoode Public Library. For information call Susan at 692-2782.

COGG, the Community Organization Greening Greely, meets 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at Greely Community Centre. For information call Anne Lavoie at 821-2615.

USING MEDICINAL HERBS

by Rita Paterson

Herbal products today are sold in health food stores, and increasingly can also be found in drug stores and even in your neighbourhood supermarket. You can find a range of food products, as well as teas, tinctures, and a variety of pills and powders. Many of the ingredients in these products come from beautiful flowering plants that can be grown in your own garden.

Many people use medicinal herbs every day to help maintain good health. However, it's important to remember that medicinal herbs should be used with care, just like any other medicine. Read the labels carefully, and if in doubt, consult your pharmacist or a knowledgeable herbalist.

Listed below is a basic herbal first-aid kit that includes some tried-and-true remedies for winter ailments. Adding herbal remedies to the conventional first-aid kit in your home increases the options available to you and your family when accidents happen or illness strikes. The 12 remedies in this kit can be found in most health food stores and pharmacies. The information is taken from the *Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants*, written by Andre Chevalier.

A BASIC HERBAL FIRST-AID KIT

Arnica ~ cream for painful bruises and muscle pain.

Calendula ~ cream for inflamed or minor wounds, skin rashes and sunburn.

Echinacea ~ capsules for colds and flu.

Feverfew ~ capsules for headaches and migraine.

Garlic ~ capsules for infections, the oil from the capsules for earache.

Lavender ~ essential oil for insect bites, stings, burns, and headaches.

Myrrah ~ tincture for sore throats and acne.

Slippery Elm ~ powder for coughs and digestive upsets.

Tea Tree Oil ~ essential oil is antiseptic and antifungal.

Thyme ~ syrup for coughs, colds and chest infections.

Valerian ~ tablets for stress and insomnia.

Witch Hazel ~ in distilled water for healing cuts and scrapes.

HAVE A HEALTHY AND COLD-FREE WINTER