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# poinsettia



*Euphorbia pulcherrima*  
'Winter Rose Renaissance' —Poinsettia

### BOTANICAL NAME

*Euphorbia pulcherrima*  
(you-FOR-bee-uh pull-CARE-ee-mah)

### COMMON NAMES

Poinsettia (POYN-set-ee-uh or POYN-set-uh), Christmas star, Christmas flower, Mexican flame leaf, Mexican flame tree, Painted leaf, Lobster plant

### DESCRIPTION

Poinsettias' brilliant display is produced by colorful bracts surrounding the real flowers, which appear as clusters of yellow

"berries" called cyathia. The petal-like bracts are modified leaves.

### COLORS

Poinsettias are available in hues of red, pink, peach, white, cream and variegated.

### VASE LIFE

With proper care and handling, cut poinsettias can last as long as seven to 10 days.

### AVAILABILITY

Poinsettias, both cuts and plants, mostly are available for the Christmas season, from November through December.

## varieties

Poinsettias that are finding success as cut flowers include 'Winter Rose Renaissance' and 'Winter Rose Crimson', with unusual, curly bracts; 'Jester', with upright bracts, available in red, pink, white and marble patterns; and 'Renaissance Red', with long stems (16 to 36 inches), large flower heads and excellent vase life (14 to 21 days). If you can't find cut poinsettias for sale, buy a plant, and cut your own.

## vase-life extenders

**PROCESSING** While processing your poinsettias, be sure to use a stem dip hydrating solution. This step is key to maximizing vase life. Antitranspirants also will help ensure long vase life.

**TEMPERATURE** Refrigeration is not required for poinsettias; display them at room temperature. Advise customers to display these blossoms out of direct sunlight and away from air/heat vents. They should put the blossoms in cooler rooms at night and mist them for longer enjoyment.

**WATER** Check the water level daily, and add warm flower-food solution as needed. Recut the stems every two or three days to ensure effective water uptake.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Poinsettias release ethylene gas, which will build up and

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The genus name "*Euphorbia*" comes from Euphorbus, the Greek physician to King Juba II (50 B.C. to A.D. 19) of Numidia (present-day Algeria). King Juba II was the first person to find a succulent-type *Euphorbia*. "*Pulcherrima*" means "very handsome." The common name "poinsettia" is in honor of Joel Robert Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, who introduced the plants into the United States in 1825. Ambassador Poinsett established the plants in his own greenhouse and then shared them with various botanical gardens and fellow horticulturists.

**FAMILY** Poinsettias are members of the *Euphorbiaceae* (spurge) family, a large family that includes such plants as *Euphorbia millii* (crown-of-thorns), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), para rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) and croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*).

**ORIGINS** Poinsettias are native to Mexico, where they grow as large shrubs to heights more than 10 feet.

**TOP SELLER** Poinsettias are the top-selling blooming plant in the United States, with 41.1 million pots sold in 2006, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. California is the top poinsettia-producing state.

cause the leaves to drop if left wrapped too long. Check with your supplier to make sure your flowers were treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the grower or transportation level.



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'Winter Rose Renaissance' —Poinsettia

Photos courtesy of Paul Eckle Ranch

## of note

**CONSUMER TIP** Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous; however, they can cause irritation if eaten. Also, the stems and foliage can release a milky sap (latex) when cut that can irritate skin although the problems usually last for only a few minutes. Communicate this to buyers with small children and pets. **sfr**

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Reach "Cut Flower of the Month" writer Steven W. Brown, AIFD, at [sbfloral@aol.com](mailto:sbfloral@aol.com) or (415) 239-3140.