



## *Poinsettias*

Can you believe it? The Christmas season is here! Where has the year gone? It is time to pull out the tree along with the decorations and start hanging lights. It is also time to purchase a few poinsettias to add to your Christmas décor. I am a big fan of poinsettias. I use them to decorate the area around my fireplace. I got that idea from my parents. They love poinsettias!

Poinsettias were named to honor Joel R. Poinsett of Greenville, South Carolina who was the US Ambassador to Mexico. Poinsett introduced this plant from Mexico in about 1852. The flower of the plant consists of modified leaves that are called bract. The color of the bracts varies from red to pink depending on the cultivar. Thanks to breeders you can find poinsettias in red, pink, white, orange, purple and multi-colors. The true flowers are small, green and yellow nubs clustered in the center of the bracts called cyathia.

The number one flowering plant sold in America each holiday season is poinsettias. Here are a few tips on the best way to care for and display this popular plant:

1. When purchasing poinsettias for your home, avoid plants that have been allowed to sit outside in the cold. These plants will have reduced quality when you bring them indoors.
2. Keep the plants in a warm location free of draft and chilling. Bright light is always best.
3. Water your poinsettia when the surface is dry to the touch. Remove any excess water from the saucer. Many poinsettias are killed as a result of excessive watering. Poinsettias are tropical plants and are tolerant of dry conditions.
4. Poinsettias like a higher humidity than most houseplants but will do well in most situations without additional humidity.
5. You do not have to fertilize your poinsettia during the holiday season. High levels of fertilizer will reduce the quality of the plant.

Go out and purchase a poinsettia or two before they are gone. If you follow the tips above, you will have beautiful poinsettias that will last throughout the holiday season. Don't forget to recycle your Christmas trees, wreaths, garlands and greenery. The Christmas tree recycling center will be located in the south parking lot of the Shelby County Showplace Arena (105 Germantown Rd). Last year over forty tons of Christmas greenery was collected and turned into mulch.

Until next time, have a wonderful Christmas holiday season and a Happy New Year!



*Christopher Cooper*