

## Extend Poinsettia Life With Proper Care

The holidays are here and our gardening thoughts turn to flowering gift plants.

There is no flower more closely associated with a particular day than the poinsettia.

Your holiday poinsettia plant, with proper care, can bring pleasure for weeks or even months after the holiday season ends. House temperatures, as well as light and humidity levels, affect the length of time the plant will remain attractive.

The poinsettia, first brought to this country from Mexico in 1825, has long been the traditional Christmas pot plant. Red-flowered forms are most popular, but white, pink and variegated pink and white varieties are also grown.

Most of the newer poinsettia varieties retain their leaves and bracts remarkably well and may stay in good shape for several months. Yet, poinsettias are somewhat sensitive to drafts, too cool or too warm temperatures, sudden temperature changes, dry atmosphere, improper watering, and dim light.

These adverse conditions can cause loss of leaves and withering of bracts — the showy colored structures commonly called “flowers”. The true flowers are actually the yellow parts tucked down in the center of each whorl of bracts.

Keep a uniform room temperature for poinsettias between 60 and 68 degrees F. plus some humidity, if possible. Temperatures above 75 degrees F. are detrimental, particularly in a dry atmosphere. Put your plant near a bright window, just out of direct sunlight. But remove it from the window at night if there is danger of chilling.

It's been said that more plants are killed or damaged by “drowning” than anything else. Plant roots need air as well as water, so avoid over-watering.

Learn to gauge the moisture content of soil by its color and feel. As the surface dries, it gets light colored. When soil is too dry, it becomes firm and sometimes cracked; when saturated, it feels slimy and sticky.

Try to maintain the soil moisture at moderate and uniform levels, neither soggy-wet nor bone-dry. And, never let the pot stand in water for any extended period of time. If the plant came wrapped in foil or other water-tight material, be sure to punch holes in the bottom or remove the wrap entirely — so water won't be trapped inside. Try to prevent your plant from wilting. Wilting causes premature deterioration.

## “Tee Time”

Hidden in last Season, hopefully, new perspective.

To aid a New Season to become more effective.

What goes on in Nature during Winter's sleep?

We well know there is a Tee Time to keep.

A magic We in each New Season with Nature share,

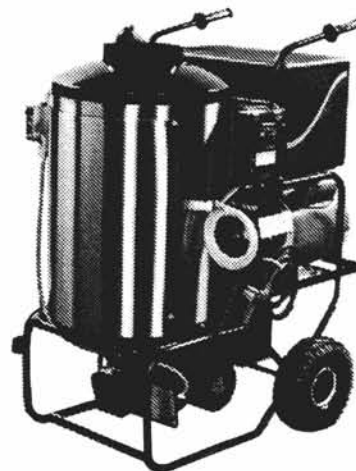
As Seasonal Procrastination fills the air.

No wonder the game of Golf has such appeal,

What wonders will the New Season reveal?

**Kenneth R. Zanzig**

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