

# After-Christmas Poinsettia Care

**A**lthough the holidays are over, the poinsettias received as gifts will be beautiful for weeks to come. According to Kathleen Gass, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service Horticulturist in Cook County, several steps can be taken to ensure an extended life to these gift plants.

Environmental conditions such as air temperature, draft, humidity, and lighting should all be monitored. A fluctuation in any of these variables could cause the loss of leaves and withering of bracts—the showy colored structures commonly called “flowers”.

A uniform room temperature of 60°F to 68° F is ideal. Avoid temperatures over 75° F. Don't set your plant near radiators or heating ducts or on top of the TV set.

Also keep plants away from direct air currents or drafts. Do not place plants in window where outside air may seep between window panes or leaves might come in contact with frosty glass. Keep the poinsettia in bright, indirect light. This will help the foliage remain deep green and the flowers brightly colored. Faded flowers and foliage are signs of poor lighting conditions.

Maintain a uniform soil moisture level. Apply water to the poinsettia until it drains from the bottom of the pot. Be sure to

punch a hole in the foil or other decorative wrap in order to allow this excess water to escape. Do not let the pot stand in this water for an extended time; otherwise, it will be reabsorbed, saturating the soil or causing a salinity problem.

Adequate humidity levels also help in extending poinsettia life. During the dry days of winter, the use of humidifiers will be of benefit to a poinsettia. A simmering teapot is another option.

If these steps are followed, the poinsettias may then be placed in your outdoor garden around Memorial Day. 

