

Poinsettia Toxicity Myth

The poinsettia is the most widely tested consumer plant on the market today, proving the myth about the popular holiday plant to be false:

- Scientific research from The Ohio State University has proved the poinsettia to be non-toxic to both humans and pets. All parts of the plant were tested, including the leaves and sap.
- According to POISINDEX, the national information center for poison control centers, a child would have to ingest 500-600 leaves in order to exceed the experimental doses that found no toxicity.

As with any non-food product, however, the poinsettia is not meant to be eaten and can cause varying degrees of discomfort. Therefore, the plant should be kept out of the reach of young children and curious pets.

Poinsettia and Latex Allergies

Concerns of latex issues are unfounded. According to the American Latex Allergy Association, only about 1 percent to 6 percent of the general population is allergic to latex, and "... one would have to have significant contact with the poinsettia plant's latex directly to have an allergic reaction ... only a small drop of latex that can be immediately wiped off of the skin is unlikely to cause an allergic reaction."



THE POINSETTIA

History and Legend Poinsettia Care Tips Toxicity Myth



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Poinsettia History

Joel Robert Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first ambassador to Mexico, first introduced poinsettias to the United States in 1825.

December 12 is National Poinsettia Day, an official day set aside to enjoy this symbol of holiday cheer. It was established upon the death of Mr. Poinsett in 1851 to honor him and the plant he made famous.

Poinsettias are native to Mexico, where they grow wild. The enchanting legend of the poinsettia dates back several centuries, to a Christmas Eve in Mexico when a little girl named Pepita had no gift to present to the Christ child. Her cousin Pedro urged her to give a humble gift. On her way to church she gathered some weeds she found along the road. As she approached the altar, a miracle happened: The weeds blossomed into brilliant flowers. Then they were called Flores de Noche Buena — Flowers of the Holy Night. Now they are called poinsettias.

Poinsettia Care Tips

Poinsettias are one of the longest-lasting blooming plants available to consumers.

To choose the perfect poinsettia and keep it blooming, follow these care tips:

Choosing the perfect poinsettia:

- Pick a plant with small, tightly clustered buds in the center.
- Look for crisp, bright, undamaged foliage.
- Avoid plants displayed in drafty or crowded areas.

To keep the poinsettia blooming:

- When surface soil is dry to the touch, water thoroughly. Discard excess water in the saucer.
- To prolong color, keep a temperature range of 60 degrees for night and 72 degrees for day. High humidity is preferable.
- Place plant away from hot or cold drafts, and protect from cold winds.

To Rebloom Next Season

- During winter, continue to follow holiday upkeep tips.
- **March 17 (St. Patrick's Day):** When bracts fade, cut stems back to eight inches above soil line.
- Continue to water regularly.
- Lightly fertilize with a balanced all-purpose plant food every three to four weeks.
- When temperatures are warm, place plant outdoors; first in indirect, then direct sunlight. Avoid temperatures below 50 degrees throughout the summer.
- **July 4 (Independence Day):** Cut back new growth stems. Repot if needed.
- **Early September (Labor Day):** Move plant inside. Provide six or more hours of direct light.
- **October 1 through December:** Confine plant to complete darkness for 14 hours, giving it 10 hours of natural light daily. This will set the buds and cause bracts to color.