

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Thiessen December 20, 2024

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Holiday Plants Brighten the Season

During the Christmas season, a variety of vibrant plants can enhance your home decor. Many houseplants are available this time of year including holiday cactus, Christmas pepper, kalanchoe, amaryllis, and cyclamen. Most of these plants can be enjoyed long past Christmas with the correct care. Here are some simple steps to care for the most common holiday plants.

The poinsettia was named after Joel Robert Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first American ambassador to Mexico. He sent some poinsettia plants home to Greenville, South Carolina in 1825. Poinsettias are the number one potted flowering plant grown in the United States. The large colorful parts of the plant are not true flowers, they are modified leaves called 'bracts'. The true flowers are the small yellow/green buds in the center of the bracts. When choosing a poinsettia to bring home, look for tightly clustered yellow buds and crisp, bright, undamaged foliage.

To keep poinsettias looking beautiful, water when the plant's soil feels dry. Place them in a room with bright light but not next to a drafty window. You can try to keep your poinsettia year round, but they are bred to be large and colorful, not long lasting. It might be a fun experiment to keep the plant till next Christmas but it is also easy to pick up a new one each season. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not toxic. They can cause stomach irritation but unless you eat around 600 leaves you won't get sick.

Amaryllis are large bell-shaped flowers that make an excellent container plant around Christmas time. Amaryllis come in a wide variety of colors and color combinations. Start with a high-quality bulb. Properly cared for, amaryllis bulbs produce for decades and may bear up to six

flowers on a single stalk. Use a small pot with only an inch between the bulb and the pot. Use a well-drained potting soil, and plant the bulb so that one-half to two-thirds of the bulb neck is above the soil line. Thoroughly water after potting and keep the soil slightly moist until flowering. When flowering begins, increase watering frequency. Amaryllis prefers bright sunlight and temperatures between 70 to 75 degrees. After flowering begins, cooler temperatures will prolong the life of the flowers.

Add some bright color to your holidays by purchasing or gifting a holiday plant. They are easy to care for and may last from season to season. K-State Research and Extension has a variety of resources for all your gardening and plant needs. Stop by or give us a call with your questions.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at cchiessen@ksu.edu or by calling Beloit (785-738-3597).