

Poinsettia
by Kim Gabel, Environmental Horticulture Agent
UF/IFAS/Monroe County Extension Services

Poinsettia is a popular Keys holiday plant that brightens our homes. Poinsettias are tropical plants, originating in southern Mexico and Central America. In 1825 Joel R. Poinsett, introduced the poinsettia to America.

There are a wide variety of colors including red, pink, gold, white, purple, and variegated colors. The showy portion of the plant is the bracts (modified leaves) not the flowers. The true flowers are small, green and yellow nubs clustered in the centers of the bracts.

When purchasing your poinsettia, look for a plant with dark green, healthy foliage, strong stems and brightly colored bracts. Always check for insects before bringing a new plant into your home.

Care of Poinsettia in the home

- **Location:** Put the plant in a warm sunny location not more than three feet away from a window. Avoid placing the plant in extremely sunny, hot or dry situations.
- **Watering:** Water your poinsettia when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch. If the plant comes in a decorative foil wrapping, make a hole in the bottom to allow for good drainage. When watering, it prefers to be kept slightly moist to somewhat dry, so water only when the soil surface is dry to the touch. Do not let the plant sit in water as this may cause root rot. Wilting and yellowing leaves can result from too little or too much water.

- **Humidity:** Poinsettia like a little bit higher humidity than the average household but will do fine in most situations without additional humidity. Misting plants or placing them on gravel trays will prolong the color and life of the poinsettia.
- **Fertilization:** It is not necessary to fertilize your poinsettia during the holiday season. In fact, high levels of fertilizer will reduce the quality of the plant.

Today's article information came from "Poinsettias for Florida, Indoors and Outdoors" by Robert Black and Rick Schoellhorn. To obtain a copy of this publication it is available online at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> then search for "poinsettia."