

Mrs. Esbshade Is Busy With Poinsettias Now

By Mrs. Charles G. McSparran
Farm Feature Writer

The poinsettia has become identified with Christmas, probably because of its lively red and green leaves and the fact that it is available at Christmas time.

Actually, the bloom of this plant is the little yellow flowers in the center of the tapering red bracts or leaves resembling petals.

It is a native shrub of Mexico and South America and gets its name from a man by the name of Joel R. Poinsett who was an American ambassador to Mexico.

One of Lancaster County's large growers of poinsettias is "Esbshades Greenhouse", owned and operated by Lamar Esbshade, Lititz RD1, who has greenhouses on Route 322, just east of Brickerville.

He started in the business of growing and selling vegetable and all bedding plants in 1957 with one greenhouse. He now has 13 greenhouses, four of them have plastic covering which they renew each year. He became interested in this business because he loved flowers.

Mr. and Mrs. Esbshade have lived in this Brickerville area since 1959. They have been growing poinsettias for five years. They raise about 35,000 a year.

While the traditional color of poinsettias is red, there are also pink and white ones. Esbshades have all three colors, but grow mainly the red ones.

These plants start budding about September or October. It is an indescribable beauty to see these thousands of poinsettias in bloom.

Mrs. Esbshade (Nancy) may be found wrapping them and delivering them now to local retailers and many churches. She also helped to pot them earlier.

Esbshades start by buying their plants the beginning of June. They get most of their plants from Mikkleson's of Astubula, Ohio, but also some from Paul Ecke of Encinitas, California. These plants are used to get their cuttings, which they start taking the beginning of August. They get about 10 from each plant then.

The second time, about the beginning of September, they get about 20 cuttings and again about the beginning of October. This time they get only the ones that

weren't large enough the time before.

They grow poinsettias which have been developed to last until about March. They must pay the developers a 2/4 to 2 1/2 cents royalty on each cutting they grow.

They buy top soil and mix all their own soil for potting. They also use a lot of peat moss and perlite. Quite a bit of fertilizer is used, but no spray is needed on the plants.

Steam heat is used for the greenhouses. They have auxiliary gas heaters in case of breakdown of the oil heating system. They have an automatic alarm which sounds at their home in case the heat goes below a certain temperature.

Mrs. Esbshade advises you to keep your Christmas poinsettia plant in good light to retain the color. Also to keep it in a cool place, particularly at night, and keep the soil moist.

If you want to hold the plant over for another year, gradually withhold water after the plant is through blooming. Store in a cool basement until spring, watering it once a week. Cut back the stems to about six inches and repot the plants. More than one plant can be put in a pot, depending on the size of the pot. Sink the pot in the ground in a protected spot. Prune it back about August. Bring the plant indoors before the weather turns cold and place in good sunlight. Water regularly. Give it total darkness about 12 hours a night during October and November.

Grow Other Plants

Esbshades' specialty is growing geraniums. They grow 35,000 to 40,000 of ten to fifteen varieties. They buy all cultured stock in June, then don't get disease in them. They take cuttings from them and start all of their own plants which they sell. They took their first cuttings the last week of November and will continue to take cuttings until about March. All their plants are sold by mid-June each year.

They grow around 3,000 Easter lilies and this year, for the first, have about 500 azalea plants.

They grow about 2,000 mums, the large non-hardy ones, of six or seven varieties. They usually grow about 10,000 hardy mums, but didn't this year due to other work. They will probably grow them again.

Mr. and Mrs. Esbshade start



Mrs. Lamar Esbshade starts out to deliver poinsettias. Pots with red and white blooms like these make a nice combination.

about 11,000 flats or 75,000 dozen spring vegetable and bedding plants each year.

Nancy says, "Lamar has been quite a go-getter ever since he started and isn't satisfied with anything but the best quality. He has terrific results with germination."

Steam is piped into the germination area to give enough moist heat. The plants are kept under germination from five to eight days, according to type. They transplant them about six weeks after germination. They put one dozen plants in a small flat and six of these boxes in a large flat—or six dozen plants in a flat.

In the spring they are busy selling plants from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mrs. Esbshade is at the greenhouse all the time then.

They have one man who works for them full time, one boy who works from December to June and in the spring season three full time workers and three part time workers.

They don't deliver wholesale any more and wholesalers come from as far as Philadelphia, White Haven in Luzerne County and Valley Forge. They supply retailers as far as Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Middletown.

They used to grow tulips and

hyacinths, but found it is better to grow a few kinds of plants and buy those to sell.

They do not sell cut flowers either. There's such a demand, but Mr. Esbshade doesn't want to expand unless he would have someone to take some of the responsibility.

Esbshades live on their 40 acre farm, but have rented the ground for the past two years to a neighbor who grows corn and raises baby steers. Two or three years ago Esbshades finished about 30 steers when they farmed the ground themselves. They picked one field of corn and used one field for silage.

Lamar, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Esbshade of near New Holland, grew up on a farm till he was 12 years old. His parents then moved to near Morgantown, where they had three mushroom houses and he helped with growing mushrooms. His father is in the produce business now near New Holland.

Nancy's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sauder, live near Blue Ball. Mr. Sauder has a feed mill and sells all kinds of feed to farmers.

Lamar is an ambulance driver for Brickerville. He is a member of Lancaster County Florist Club and attends their meetings.

Mr. and Mrs. Esbshade have six children. Linda is 11 years old and goes to Warwick Middle School. She plays accordion, has been taking private lessons for three and a half years. She has a good voice and is in her school chorus. "She is a terrific cook", her mother says. "She has baked delicious pies since she was nine years old." She gets lots of practical experience when her mother is working at the greenhouse. She has been in a 4-H cooking club two summers. She has been in the Girl Scouts two and a half years also. She loves to read and is beginning to sew. She recently made herself an outfit.

Fred is 10 and in the John Beck Elementary School. He plays guitar. He has been in the Boy Scouts one and a half years.

Roger is nine and in the John Beck School. He has been in the Boy Scouts also for one and a half years. He plays mandolin.

Linda, Fred and Roger play their instruments together at churches. Roger says he's going to run a greenhouse someday. He and Fred grow some plants now.

These children come by their music talent naturally because Lamar plays the steel guitar and accordion. He is chorister at church. He sings in the Cheerful

Anthems Male Chorus which has made some recordings and in the Living Herald's Quartette. The other three in the quartette are Paul Musser of Ephrata, Jay Martin of East Earl and Raymond Horst of New Holland. Lamar also sings solos at church, weddings and special meetings.

The whole family sings together and Mrs. Esbshade plays the piano.

The three younger children are Jodi, five; Steven, two and a half years; and Scott, fifteen months.

Esbshades are members of the Lititz Mennonite Church. Mr. Esbshade, besides being chorister, teaches a teenager Sunday School class. Mrs. Esbshade is in the sewing circle. They are assistant youth advisors and participate in all youth activities. They are members of a four couple prayer group and also attend Wednesday night prayer meetings at church.

Mrs. Esbshade tries to go to PTA meetings when she can.

She does a lot of sewing. She made coats and all the children's clothing when the three oldest children were smaller. She still makes a lot of clothes for all the children and all of her own clothes. She says "I love to sew." She made her sister-in-law's wedding gown. She is making drapes now for her house. She has crocheted a baby afghan, a baby sacque and bootie set.

Esbshades have a garden and all of the family work in it. Nancy does all the picking of vegetables.

They have their own peaches and pears. They have two freezers where they store their own meat and vegetables. Nancy cans the fruit.

In spite of all the work Esbshades own a 19 foot Thunderbird motor boat and do a lot of boating. They go to Long Level, Port Deposit, Md., or down to the bay.

Mr. and Mrs. Esbshade and the three oldest children love to water ski.

Linda, Fred and Roger took swimming lessons.

The three youngest ones love water, but wear life jackets, as they haven't learned to swim.

They like to camp out as a family.

They used to have a camper.

They were at a church camp a week last year. The cabins were full so they stayed in a lean-to shelter with bunks in it.

Mr. and Mrs. Esbshade love to travel. They were on a week's

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Mrs. Esbshade is flanked with a crocheted afghan, lined ponchos, boys'

suits and one of her dresses, all of which she has made.