

From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



Keeping Poinsettias Beautiful
By Jennifer Brown
Brownstown Vo-tech

By this time you've probably already gotten your "Christmas flower". Today poinsettias are being sold through many retail outlets, from flower shops to supermarkets.

The poinsettia was introduced to the United States, from Mexico, in 1825 by Joel Poinsett, who was

then the United States ambassador to Mexico. The poinsettia's botanical name was aptly given; it means "most beautiful". Did you know that all poinsettia flowers are yellow? The red, pink or white portions of the plant are actually colorful bracts which surround the flowers.

By following a few simple rules this holiday plant can bring you year round

pleasure. Poinsettias need full sun, a good moisture supply, and warm temperatures of about 60-75 degrees F. They should be watered when the soil surface is dry to the touch. When watering, drench the pot thoroughly so that some water drains through the holes in the bottom of the pot. This assures that you have moistened the entire soil volume, right down to those important lower roots. This practice also helps to leach out any salts which build up in the soil from fertilizers. After watering, empty any excess water from the saucer. Allowing the poinsettia to get "wet feet" can lead to root rot. Even though your poinsettia will thrive in a sunny window, don't let the bracts or leaves touch the cold panes. This could cause them to blacken or even drop. Avoid putting the plant in direct hot or cold drafts. Most of the improved varieties being grown today will last well into February with proper care.

If you plan to keep your poinsettia after the flower buds have fallen off, withhold water for three to four weeks. This will cause the plant to go dormant. In March or April cut the plant back to six inches above the pot rim. You should start watering again at this point. New shoots will begin to appear in about one month. Keep your poinsettia in a sunny location. You may need to transplant it to a larger pot to give it more room to grow. When transplanting, handle the roots with care as they will break easily.

Fertilize once a month for optimum growth. Pinch out the new growing tips in late August. This will produce branching, giving you a

Leadership workshops slated

Faculty from Penn State University, regional educational institutions, and responsible government and organizational representatives will lead public affairs leadership workshops at the Berks County Agricultural Center, Leesport, beginning Jan. 24 and lasting through Mar. 24. The classes will be held Saturdays (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and Wednesdays (7 p.m. to 10 p.m.).

Session topics include:
The Public Problem-Solving Process.
Improving Personal and Group Communications.
Community Resource Analysis.

Priority Setting Processes.
Local Government and Public Finance.
Land Use, Environmental Quality and Other Local Issues.

Cost of the program is \$35 per person.

Each participant is expected to attend all the workshop sessions. Participants are also encouraged to become involved in community problem-solving activities. Interested persons should mail an application form to either the Berks, Lebanon, or Schuylkill Cooperative Extension Service office. Their addresses and phone numbers are:

Cooperative Extension Service, Berks County Ag

Center, Leesport, Pa. 19533 Phone 717-273-3748.
Phone 215-378-1327.

Cooperative Extension Service, P.O. Box 404, Schuylkill Haven, Pa. 17971 Phone 717-385-3431

Open house recommended

Housing an animal may hurt rather than help it. Most animals may be healthier roughing it, reminds Joseph H. Way, county agricultural agent at Penn State University.

Most farm animals may be more comfortable in an open-front shed than in closed housing. While animals need shelter from the wind, rain and snow, they also need freedom to move, a dry bed, and plenty of fresh air.

Often closed housing is primarily for the benefit of human caretakers rather than the livestock. The wind chill index is a measure of human rather than animal discomfort, Joseph H. Way explains.

In a closed structure, ventilation is sometimes inadequate, resulting in damp humid conditions. Odors also build up, creating an unhealthy environment.

During the winter, snow blow-in can be a problem with small, open sheds, but front adjustable doors may be the answer.

Even in severe winter weather, livestock should not be cooped up for long periods of time.

When moisture collects on the walls, floors and windows of closed buildings, ventilation is inadequate. The animals or birds in the building are sure to be suffering respiratory stress.

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BIRD-IN-HAND, PA. 17505

Dealers Wanted

bushier, more rounded plant. Start giving your poinsettia long nights on October 1. This means making sure it gets a 14 hour period of complete darkness each day. Putting it in a closet from 5p.m. to 7a.m., away from all light whether natural or artificial, will cause flower buds to form. When these buds are visible discontinue the long nights. Your poinsettia will be in full bloom for the holidays.

If you've never had a poinsettia, try one this year. If you haven't had much luck with them perhaps now you know what you've been doing wrong. Give them another try, they can certainly add color to your Christmas!

Birds must be tested

HARRISBURG - Backyard bird pets have become a favorite among Pennsylvanians, but there is always the question of where to get a healthy fowl of good stock.

The answer, according to Dr. Edward T. Mallinson, chief of the Pennsylvania Agriculture Department's Poultry Health Division, is at the Farm Show and other state fairs and shows.

All birds exhibited at the Farm Show, which this year runs from Jan. 5 - 9, are required by Department regulation to be from flocks tested and certified as pullorum-free. Pullorum, Mallinson explained, is a fatal, bacterially caused disease that especially affects young poultry.

"I can think of no better way for people to locate

good, healthy birds than at the Farm Show," said Mallinson. "There is always a wide assortment of breeds, including Polish, Araucanas, Andalusian and Golden Sebright chickens, Runner ducks and many other types of chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys."

Mallinson contended that Pennsylvania is a leader in poultry breeding and disease control. "Many of the exhibitors will be available during the Farm Show and people, reassured that the birds they view are healthy and of good stock, can often negotiate purchases right on the spot," said Mallinson.

Assembly instruction needed

The Carroll County Farm Museum at Westminster, Md. is attempting to restore to authentic and operative conditions and old circular horse power unit which it has in its possession.

But there's a problem. The unit, which was used approximately 100 years ago, is disassembled and no one knows for sure how to put the contraption together.

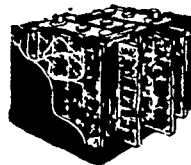
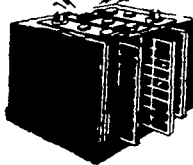
"I would be greatly indebted to your organization (Lancaster Farming) if you could in some way put me in touch with someone who has such a unit that I might look at one which is set up for operating," writes John H. Westminister, of Hallside Farm, Westminster.

He asks to be contacted at his home address: 1078 Sullivan Rd., Westminster, Md. zip code 21157.

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