

Special care needed for poinsettias

MEDIA - Poinsettias, commonly thought of as the Christmas plants, have become popular plants in many American homes. They were introduced to the United States in 1825 by Joel Robert Poinsett, first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. The common name for the exotic plant, poinsettias, came from his last name.

If one gets a poinsettia for his home, he should place it near a sunny window, where it will get the most available sunlight. A window which faces south, east or west is better than one facing north. No part of the plant should touch the cold window pane because this may injure it. To keep the plant in bloom, a person should maintain a temperature of 65 to 70° F. during the daylight hours and move it to a cooler place at night. Since root rot damage is more prevalent in temperatures below 60° F., the poinsettia should never

be put in a room cooler than this. One should avoid exposing the plant to hot or cold drafts, which may cause premature leaf drop. The soil should be examined daily, and when the surface is dry to the touch, one can water the plant until the water runs freely out the drainage hole in the container. If using a flower pot container, a person should discard the water which accumulates in it. The plant shouldn't be left standing in water or the soil will lack sufficient air, or will be too wet - conditions which injure the roots. A wilted plant may drop leaves prematurely, so one should try to keep it well watered. If wilting does occur, one can water the plant thoroughly once to moisten the entire soil mass, and then again after five minutes.

Poinsettias can be refloored the second Christmas, but unless a

year-long schedule of care is observed, the results usually aren't good. For such a schedule, one should continue normal watering of the plant until the first of March, when the soil is allowed to dry gradually. The soil shouldn't get so dry that the stems shrivel, because this is a sign of dying. Following the drying period, the plant should be stored in a cool (60° F) airy location.

In the middle of April, the stems should be cut back to about six inches above the soil level and replanted in a pot one to two inches in diameter larger than the original pot. A good potting soil mixture, such as two parts soil, one part sphagnum or peat moss and one part medium to coarse perlite is essential. One should water thoroughly; wait 5 minutes and water again. The plant should be put near a window facing south. A person should keep

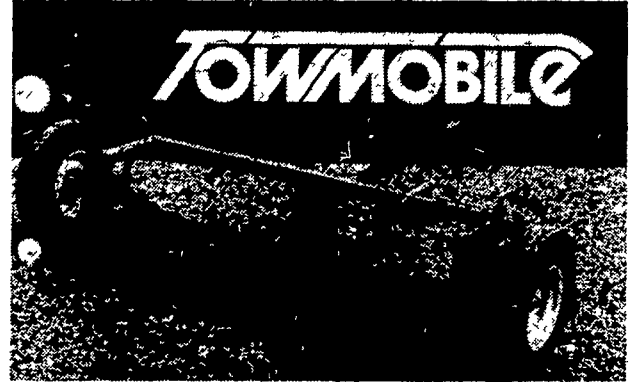
the plant at a temperature of 70 to 75° F. and water it when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch. After new growth appears, it can be fertilized every two weeks with a complete-analysis, water soluble fertilizer at the rate recommended on the label.

In early June, the plant can be moved outdoors and placed in a lightly shaded location. Watering and fertilizing should continue while the plant is outdoors. Between August 15 and September 1, the stems should be cut back, leaving three or four leaves on each shoot; then one should bring the plant indoors again and place it in a window facing south. If the plant is not cut back, it will grow too tall and be unsightly. The plant should be kept at a temperature of 65 to 70° F. and fertilizing and watering should continue as before. Poinsettias are short-day

plants, meaning they flower about 10 weeks after the length of daylight shortens to 11 hours or less. Therefore, to have a plant in full flower by Christmas, keep it in complete darkness between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. A closet,

opaque box, or cloth will keep the plant in darkness during these hours. One should always remember to put the plant near a sunny window in the daytime and continue fertilizing the plant until mid-December.

WHAT'S NEW



TOWMOBILE

Unverferth McCurdy announces a practical and economical equipment transporter which enables one man with a pickup truck or car to transport a tractor or combine. The new Unverferth McCurdy towmobile can move a 2WD tractor with up to two attached implements cross country safely and easily. Ideal for combines, too, the Towmobile eliminates the need for flatbed trailers or trucks to get equipment to remote fields, or from farm to farm.

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row front end setups, and in a 100 inch cradle width for 40 inch row front end setups.

For more information, contact Bill Ferris, Shippenburg, Pa. at 717-532-9226.

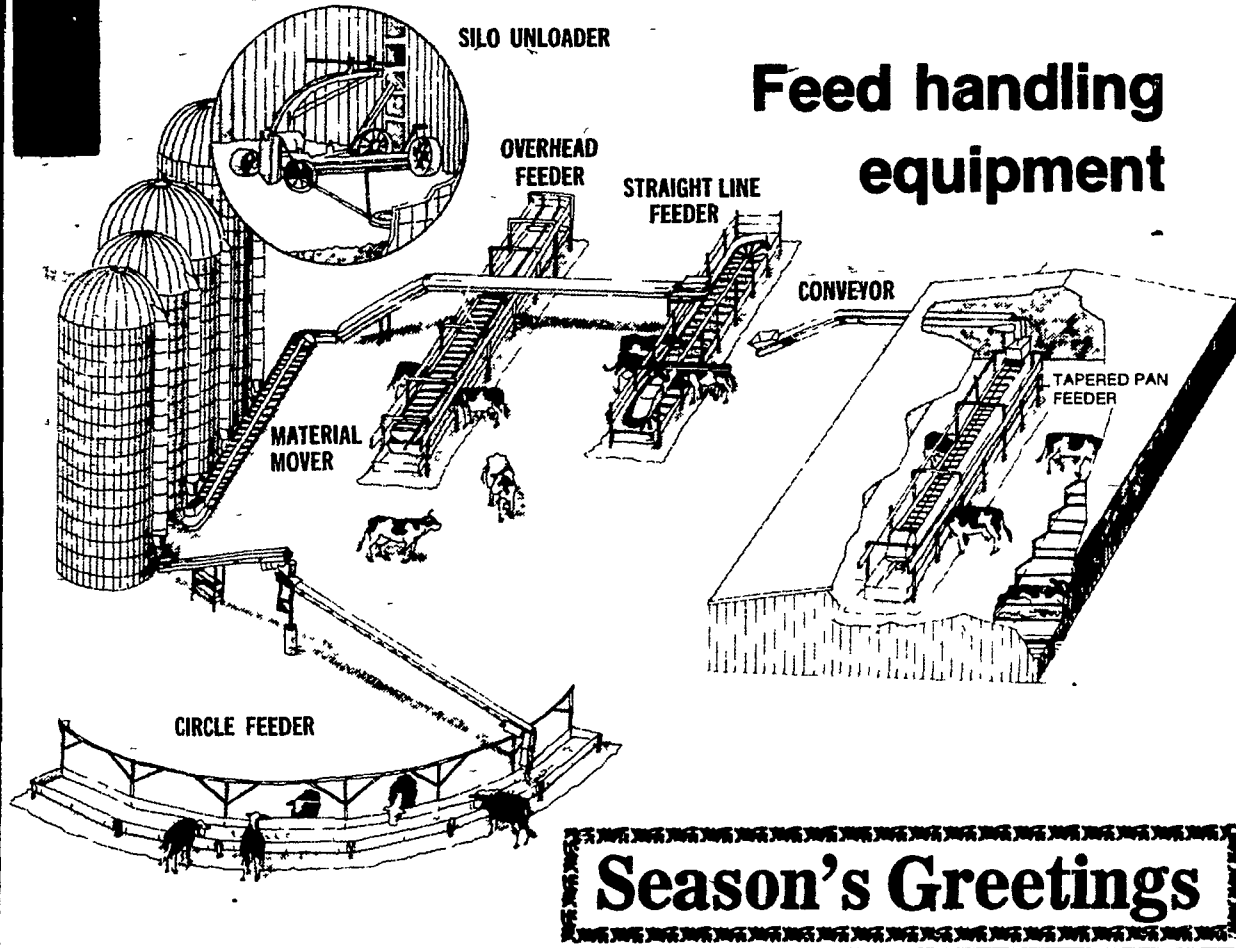


CHILD CARE TAX BREAK NOW A CREDIT

Here's tax-saving advice about child care costs: The tax break given to working parents who hire someone to care for their children during working hours has been changed from a deduction to a credit. This means that up to four hundred dollars per year for one child - eight hundred for two or more - can be subtracted from taxes owed.

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