

Poinsettias are live Christmas decorations

FLEMINGTON, N.J. - It has to be the combination of attractive light green leaves, flaming scarlet bracts, and small yellow flowers that makes the poinsettia the favored Christmas flower.

The garden centers, florist shops, retail greenhouses abound in poinsettias these three or four weeks prior to Christmas.

The poinsettia, incidentally, derives its name from Joel R. Poinsett, American Ambassador to Mexico in the mid-1880's. He introduced the plant to the U.S.

Plant breeders have improved the plant over the years. They are much more

hardy, can seem to thrive in most homes right on to Easter. They are generally expected to maintain their color and foliage even to May when they are set out in a sheltered spot in the yard.

Selection of a poinsettia early in the season is best. A person will have many types to choose from. Not just in shape, density and size, but color. They are available in pink, white, variegated, in addition to the traditional scarlet.

There are two general types of poinsettias: branched and unbranched. Growers induce branching by pinching off the growing tip early in the season.

Sideshoots then develop. There will be more bracts and flowers as a result.

In potting the plants, a florist will generally plant several together. Prices are usually based on overall size and the number of bracts.

It's best for a person to select a poinsettia with large symmetrical bracts and stems covered with numerous and healthy-appearing leaves.

Once it's home, one should treat his newly purchased "Christmas Flower" with care. One can prolong its life and enjoy its beauty by placing it in a room with sufficient light to read fine print.

avoid drafts or excess heat from appliances, fireplaces, radiators, heating ducts; selecting a place out of the traffic area;

placing the pot in a water-tight tray or container to protect furnishings;

watering plant thoroughly when soil is dry to touch, discard excess water. It won't like wet feet.

and keeping the best temperatures which are no higher than 72 degrees F. day or 60 degrees F. night to prolong the bright colors of the bracts.

When the bracts fade, hopefully, not for several months, a person should cut plant back to eight inches and allow to grow as a foliage plant. It can be

placed out-of-doors in warm weather. Night-time temperatures below 50 degrees F. should be avoided.

In addition to the poinsettia, a person might wish to consider a few of the other popular Christmas plants: Cyclamen, Azalia, Chrysanthemum, Begonia, Jerusalem cherry, Kalanchoe, Christmas pepper.

Sandwich Meal

Making that lunchtime sandwich into a meal is simple fresh fruits and vegetables add the necessary ingredients. Pack a whole tomato to slice fresh right before eating. Top off many sandwich creations with alfalfa sprouts. Sprouts combine well with turkey, ham, bacon, lettuce, tomato avocado and cheese

Ida's Notebook



Ida Risser

A few days ago, I received an envelope of snapshots in the mail. It contained printed evidence of happenings from the Summer and Fall Season. Pictured were achievements of different children, Philip's room at college, Judy's first apartment and the progress of the new heifer barn.


There is nothing like a picture to bring back memories. I have a large

camel-back trunk filled with photos from years gone by. The first ones were taken when at the age of twelve, I begged a camera from my aunt and grandfather. The two of them finally decided they'd pool resources and spend three dollars for a camera. Don't forget this was during the Depression! If it wasn't impossible to get film, I might still be using that same box camera. But

on my birthday, my husband-to-be surprised me with an expensive one which I used for thirty years. Only recently did I splurge and get one that takes indoor pictures without flash cubes. They always seemed to cause so much trouble for other people - like not having any when you needed them.

Sometimes people are asked to list, in order, what they would save from a burning house. I've always put that trunk of photos at the top of the list. There is one of my first baby in her grandpa's arms - standing on the same spot where he held me. There is one of our first son, at age nine months, sitting on a tricycle with his muscular legs on the pedals. One of our second son, age 18 months, as he sneaked to the barn with a yardstick to "get the cows up." And many others that bring back a rush of memories of all 19 cousins at a picnic or my husband and the first deer that he shot.

At least they are all marked and dated and someday, if I ever sit down long enough, I'll put them all in albums.

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