



Sean Lefever and his sister Sandra both help out at their father's greenhouses. Their sister Debbie, who is not pictured, is also active in the business.

## Poinsettias add a festive touch to holiday decorations

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — Poinsettias grace living rooms, restaurants, shopping centers and church sanctuaries, contributing to the festive atmosphere that is unique to Christmas. The appearance of this traditional Christmas plant reminds us that the holiday season with all its anticipation and gaiety is in full swing.

Poinsettias usually start blooming right after Thanksgiving, and with the proper care, will last until Easter, local florist Melvin Lefever says.

Lefever, who owns and operates Lefever's Flowers on Jarvis Road in Lancaster, raises thousands of poinsettias to meet the healthy seasonal demand for this popular plant. And, he knows how to make sure that the sensitive plants bloom at just the right time.

This year, Lefever planted 5,500 stock plants that in early August yielded 195,000 cuttings. Each three-inch cutting is planted in an oasis strip or cube, and placed under a misting system for about three weeks while the roots are forming.

The plants are misted two times every 15 minutes during the daylight hours, but during the night, the misting system is turned off, Lefever said.

Once the roots have formed, the poinsettias are potted. It takes nine plants to fill a 10-inch hanging pot, and six to fill an eight-inch one, Lefever said. However, single plants with several blooms are the biggest sellers.

Many varieties of poinsettias are available, but the inexperienced eye has trouble detecting the differences between them. "When they're blooming, they all look pretty," Lefever said.

The festive plants come in red, white, marbled (pink and white) and pink. In the Lancaster area red is the most popular color and pink is the least favorite, Lefever observed.

For the first month of growth, poinsettias should be kept at 70°F., but when the leaves start to change color, the room temperature is reduced to 60°F. If it gets too hot, Lefever said, the yellow centers will fall off.

The proper amount of light is also essential to raising poinsettias. If they get too much light at night, they won't bloom. "They just want regular daylight hours," Lefever explained.

The leaves on poinsettias are about 1/4 inch apart, but are topped until there are about five or six joints on each stem. Each stem

yields about four to seven flowers.

Lefever said the ideal height for a poinsettia is a foot to 18 inches tall, they are sprayed with Cycocel, a plant regulator that retards stem growth.

Because of an exceptionally long, warm fall, poinsettias are a bit taller than usual this year, despite the use of Cycocel.

If you have purchased a poinsettia or received one as a gift, you should avoid watering it too much. The soil should be kept moist, but not soggy. If the pot is wrapped in foil, the foil should be removed to assure proper drainage.

The ideal temperature for your poinsettia is 70°F. during the day and 62 to 65°F. at night. With the proper care and a lot of luck, the poinsettia may bloom a second year. However, Lefever doesn't recommend getting your hopes up too high. It's really difficult to get them to bloom again, he says.

Churches are some of Lefever's best poinsettia customers, he said. He sells poinsettias to about 40 or 50 local churches for just \$1 over the

wholesale price. He also supplies many of the local retailers with Christmas poinsettias. This year's abundant crop is almost sold out, Lefever says, even as he is interrupted by a phone call from New York for a large order.

The Lefever family has been in the greenhouse business for over 50 years. Melvin's father, Jacob, started the business raising mostly cut flowers. However, because of a changing market, Melvin has changed the emphasis to potted plants and spring garden plants.

Most of the family is involved in the business. Melvin's son, Sean, who recently graduated from high school, is now quite active in the business, and his two daughters, Debbie Johnson and Sandra Scott, tend the flower shop.

Right now the Lefevers are coping with the Christmas rush and they will continue to be busy even after Christmas Day, when most people get a chance to relax. Come December 30, they will be filling the greenhouses now empty of poinsettias with pot mums for Easter.



The sight of a festive poinsettia signals that the holiday season is in full swing.

See your nearest

SPERRY NEW HOLLAND

Dealer for Dependable Equipment and Dependable Service:

**Alexandria, PA**  
Clapper Farm  
Equipment  
Star Route  
814-669-4465

**Annville, PA**  
B H M Farm  
Equipment, Inc  
R D 1  
717-867-2211

**Beavertown, PA**  
B&R Farm  
Equipment, Inc  
RD 1, Box 217A  
717-658-7024

**Belleville, Pa.**  
Ivan J Zook  
Farm Equipment  
Belleville, Pa  
717-935-2948

**Carlisle, PA**  
Paul Shovers, Inc  
35 East Willow Street  
717-243-2686

**Chambersburg, PA**  
Clugston  
Implement, Inc  
R D. 1  
717-263-4103

**Davidsburg, PA**  
George N Gross, Inc  
R D 2, Dover, PA  
717-292-1673

**Elizabethtown, PA**  
Messick Farm,  
Equipment, Inc  
Rt 283 - Rheem's Exit  
717-367-1319

**Everett, PA**  
C. Paul Ford & Son  
RD 1  
814-652-2051

**Gettysburg, PA**  
Yingling Implements  
R D 9  
717-359-4848

**Greencastle, PA**  
Meyers  
Implement's Inc.  
400 N. Antrim Way  
P.O. Box 97  
717-597-2176

**Grove City, PA**  
McDowell Farm  
Implement Co.  
Rt. 173 North  
814-786-7955

**Halifax, PA**  
Sweigard Bros  
R D 3, Box 13  
717-896-3414

**Hamburg, PA**  
Shartlesville  
Farm Service  
R D 1, Box 1392  
215-488-1025

**Honey Brook, PA**  
Dependable Motor Co  
East Main Street  
215-273-3131  
215-273-3737

**Honey Grove, PA**  
Norman D Clark  
& Son, Inc  
Honey Grove, PA  
717 734-3682

**Hughesville, PA**  
Farnsworth Farm  
Supplies, Inc  
103 Cemetery Street  
717-584-2106

**Lancaster, PA**  
L H Brubaker, Inc  
350 Strasburg Pike  
717-397-5179

**Lebanon, PA**  
Keller Bros  
Tractor Co  
RD 7, Box 405  
717-949-6501

**Lititz, PA**  
Roy A Brubaker  
700 Woodcrest Av  
717-626-7766

**Loysville, PA**  
Paul Shovers, Inc  
Loysville, PA  
717-789-3117

**Lynnport, PA**  
Kermit K Kistler, Inc  
Lynnport, PA  
215-298-2011

**Martinsburg, PA**  
Forshey's, Inc  
110 Forshey St  
814-793-3791

**Mill Hall, PA**  
Paul A. Dotterer  
RD 1  
717-726-3471

**New Holland, PA**  
A B C Groff, Inc  
110 South Railroad  
717-354-4191

**New Park, PA**  
M&R Equipment Inc  
P O Box 16  
717-993-2511

**Oley, PA**  
C J Wonsidler Bros  
RD 2  
215-987-6257

**Pitman, PA**  
Marlin W Schreffler  
Pitman, PA  
717-648-1120

**Quakertown, PA**  
C J. Wonsidler Bros  
RD 1  
215-536-1935

**Quarryville, PA**  
C E Wiley & Son, Inc  
101 South Limé Street  
717-786-2895

**Ringtown, PA**  
Ringtown Farm  
Equipment  
Ringtown, PA  
717-889-3184

**Silverdale, PA**  
I.G. Sales  
Box 149  
215-257-5135

**Tamaqua, rA**  
Charles S. Snyder, Inc.  
R D 3  
717-386-5945

**Troy, PA**  
Warner Tractor  
& Equipment, Inc  
Troy, PA  
717-297 2141

**West Chester, PA**  
M S. Yearsley & Son  
114-116 East  
Market Street  
215-696 2990

**West Grove, PA**  
S G Lewis & Son, Inc  
R D 2, Box 66  
215-869-2214

**Churchville, MD**  
Walter G Coale, Inc  
2849-53  
Churchville Rd.  
301-734-7722

**Rising Sun, MD**  
Ag Ind  
Equipment Co., Inc  
1207 Telegraph Rd  
301-398-6132  
301-658-5568  
215-869-3542

**Washington, NJ**  
Frank Rymon & Sons  
201-689-1464

**Woodstown, NJ**  
Owen Supply Co.  
Broad Street &  
East Avenue  
609-769-0308