# Take care of Christmas plants

STATE COLLEGE - People who were lucky enough to find indoor plants under the Christmask tree must know a thing or two about caring for their gifts, Penn State horticulturist J. Robert Nuss says. No matter how attractive these plants are during the holidays, their flowers are shortlived when brought into the home.

Nuss offers the following advice in caring for Christmas plants:

• For azaleas, make sure the plants are exposed to bright light. or full sunlight. Keep them watered well all the time. Avoid

direct heat or drafts on the open flowers, because this speeds the loss of moisture. Azaleas can be saved for use outdoors.

• Christmas begonias should be kept in full sunlight during the daytime, but they should be given cool temperatures at night. These plants are difficult to grow indoors, and should be discarded after the season.

• Christmas cactus plants need full sunlight and cool temperatures between 50 and 65 to preserve the open flowers and prevent the drop of formed buds. The flowers fail to

open if the plants remain in temperatures above 70 for very long. This plant is not a true cactus, so it does need uniform levels of moisture. Christmas cactus plants can be a part of a permanent indoor collection.

 Christmas pepper plants arē annual plants grown for their colorful fruit. Bright light and cool temperatures will slow the fruit drop indoors. When the plant's quality goes, so should the plant.

· Cineraria is another breed of plant to discard after flowering. It will hold for quite some time if given full sunlight, cool night temperatures and lots of water. The lower leaves will quickly yellow and wilt in low light and dry

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 Cyclamen plants like cooler temperatures to retain the flowers and forming buds in the crown of the plant. Full sunlight and uniformly moist soils are needed to keep the plant alive. Cyclamen plants can be saved for another season by gradually reducing the

soils.

when they can be repotted and grown again. • Jerusalem cherry plants are used during the holiday season for their colorful fruit that naturally drops after it ripens. The fruit will ripen slower in cooler tem-peratures and full sunlight. Once the fruit drops, discard the plant.

moisture after flowering. Keep them on the dry side until June,

• Kalanchoe plants will hold their flowers in full sunlight. The soil must be uniformly moist or the flowers will drop early. These plants will make ideal permanent house plants for their foliage, but flowers in their second season are generally not as good as flowers in

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the first year. · Poinsettias will hold most of their leaves and colorful red bracts for many weeks if given full light and cool night temperatures. For best results, keep the soil damp but not too wet. Poinsettias are bothered most often by extreme conditions - too low a light level, too hot or cold a temperature, too low or dry a humidity around the foliage.

Poinsettias can be kept from one season to the next. They make interesting foliage plants in the garden during the summer months. After the flowers and foliage decline in late winter, cut the top back to three or four buds to allow the plant to dry off slightly. As the weather warms, resume watering to grow new foliage for the summer. Flowering is induced in the fall by altering the amount of light the plant receives.

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food, ag fellowships UNIVERSITY PARK Penn State's departments of food science and agricultural engineering successfully competed in the 1984 USDA Food and Agricultural Sciences

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National Needs Graduate Fellowship program. Both departments are funded for three fellowships each to support new students in 1985.

The fellowships are part of the \$5 million set aside in the 1984 Federal budget to support postgraduate education in agricultural science. They are awarded by the higher education programs of the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA.

Of the 147 proposals submitted for graduate fellowships, only 67 were funded and only eight other universities received awards for masters degree work in food science and agricultural engineering. Penn State received \$64,000 under this



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