## 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


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 Southern AnthracnoseNorthern and southern anthracnose can kill or greatly reduce the stand life of red clover
open if the plants remain in emperatures above 70 for very ong. 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 are annual plants grown for their colorful fruit. Bright light and cool temperatures will slow the fruit drop undoors. When the plant's quality goes, so should the plant. - Cineraria is another breed of plant to discard after flowering It plant to discard after flowering. It given full sunlight some time if given full sunlight, cool night temperatures and lots of water.
The lower leaves will quickly The lower leaves will quickly
yellow and wilt in low light and dry
- Cyclamen plants like cooler temperatures to retain the flowers and forming buds in the crown of the plant. Full sunlight and uniformly moist soils tre needed to keep the plant alive. Cyclamen plants can be saved for another season by gradually reducing the moisture after flowering. Keep them on the dry side until June 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 temperatures and full sunlight. Once the fruit drops, discard the plant.
- Kalanchoe plants will hold their flowers in full sunlight. The soil must be uniformly moist or the lowers will drop early. These plants will make ideai permanent house plants for their foliage, but lowers 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 too hot or cold a temperature, too low or dry a humidity around the oliage.
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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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 Service of the USDA. Of the 147 proposal submitted for graduat 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 program.

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