

Garden Column for the Salisbury Post  
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The Thanksgiving Holidays, or should I say Halloween, marks the official Christmas season and poinsettias are in full color with retail outlets fully stocked. Rowan County poinsettia growers were right on schedule with this year's crop and they look very good. Poinsettias, like mums, are a great buy for all the time and care that has gone into their production. In spite of inflation and increased energy costs, the holiday plant is still a great bargain. After 5 months of growth and care, poinsettias only last a few weeks during the holiday season. However, with a little help, the official holiday plant can look good for many days. Below are tips from poinsettia growers that will help keep your plant looking its best for the holidays.

- o Try to use a large, roomy shopping bag to protect your plant when transporting it. Most growers will have plastic sleeves to protect the plant.
- o Place your plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day. If direct sun can't be avoided, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain.
- o Make sure the room temperature is between 68 - 70° F. If you are comfortable, so is your poinsettia, however the cooler the better.
- o Try not to expose poinsettias to temperatures below 50° F. Poinsettias are sensitive to cold, so avoid placing them outside during the winter months.
- o Avoid placing plants near cold drafts or excessive heat. Avoid placing plants near appliances, televisions, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.
- o Be sure to water your plant when the soil feels dry to the touch.
- o Over-watering quickly kills poinsettias. Do not allow it to sit in standing water. Always remove a plant from any decorative container before watering, and allow the water to drain completely.
- o Those that plan to keep poinsettias after the holiday season should fertilize the plant with a balanced, all-purpose fertilizer. Treat it like a houseplant during the winter months. Prune the plant back in the spring and

move outdoors to an area that receives filtered light. Continue to fertilize and tip prune to keep the plant compact. However, as beautiful as they are, poinsettias are grown as disposable plants and it rather difficult or almost impossible for saved plants to be of the same quality as they came from the grower.

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