What We Will Cover

• Plants we will discuss
  • Poinsettias
  • Holiday Cactus
  • Amaryllis

• Selection

• Care after bringing them home

• What to do when the blooms are gone

Plants

• Holiday Plants - Poinsettia
  • Available with many different colored Bracts
    • Red
    • White
    • Pink
    • Peach
    • Yellow
    • Marbled
    • Speckled
  • 80% sold in the US are Red
  • Bracts are specialized leaves, not flowers
  • They are designed to attract pollinators
  • Originally an outdoor plant native to the West Coast of Mexico
  • Can grow to be 12 feet tall
  • Joel Roberts Poinsett brought them to the USA on a plant exchange program in 1800s
  • Paul Ecke Sr. of California developed a poinsettia plant that would grow indoors
  • Became the No. 1 selling plant in the US
  • December 12 is Poinsettia Day (also the date Poinsett died)

• Holiday Plants – Holiday Cactus
  • Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter cacti
  • Bloom times
  • Thanksgiving – Late November to late December
  • Christmas – Late December through March
  • Easter – March through May
  • Depending on species, available in shades of
    • Red
    • White
    • Orange
    • Pink
• Purple
• They are true cacti
• Originally from the mountainous jungles of Brazil
  • They are epiphytic plants
  • Their roots anchor them to branches high up in forest trees or in shady areas of cliffs
• The three species can be identified but the shape of the stems

• Holiday Plants - Amaryllis
  • Most popular colors are Red and White
  • Also may be
    • Pink
    • Salmon
    • Apricot
    • Rose
    • Deep burgundy
  • Some are bi-colored
  • Flowers range from 4 to 10 inches, either single or double.
• Native to Peru and South Africa
• Genus *Amaryllis* comes from the Greek word *amarysso*, which means "to sparkle"
• Bulbs were brought to Europe in the 1700s
• Have been known to bloom for up to 75 years
• Today, most amaryllis are hybrids

Selection
• Selection - Poinsettias
  • Look for dark green foliage all the way down the stem and brightly colored bracts
  • Foliage should be fresh, with no wilted foliage
  • Flowers are yellow to green, button-like objects located in the center
  • Flowers should be tightly closed with no yellow pollen showing
  • Also, check the undersides of the leaves for Whiteflies – a common problem for poinsettias
  • Put the plant in a protective sleeve before taking it outside
  • Temperatures below 50 degrees can damage the bracts and leaves
  • Even brief exposure to freezing temps can cause the leaves and bracts to drop off
  • Never leave a poinsettia outside in a cold car
• Selection – Holiday Cactus
  • Foliage should be sturdy and a healthy green
  • Be sure there are new flower buds
  • Don’t buy plants that appear to be ‘bloomed out’
  • Carefully wrap plants before taking them outside
  • Exposure at freezing temperatures can damage leaves and cause flower drop
• Check to make sure the soil isn’t wet
• Avoid diseased or insect-damaged plants
• Selection - Amaryllis
  • Look for the largest bulbs
    • Will produce more stalks and blooms
    • Large bulb = more flowers
  • Bulbs should be firm and dry
  • Check for signs of mold, decay or injury.
  • Some growth may have already started
  • The new growth should be bright green, without spots or other damage
  • Any off-shoots will in time grow into a new bulb

At Home Care
• At Home Care - Poinsettias
  • Once home, immediately unwrap your poinsettia
  • Place it near a sunny window or other well-lighted area
  • Don't let the plant touch the cold windowpane
  • Keep your poinsettia away from cold drafts or heat outlets
  • Poinsettias prefer temperatures between 60º to 70º F
  • Make sure there is a drainage hole in the pot or decorative sleeve
  • Check the potting soil daily using the finger test
  • When the soil is dry to the touch, it's time to water
  • Take it to the sink and water the plant until it freely flows out the bottom of the pot
  • Discard the excess water which drains into the saucer.
  • Both over- and under watering cause problems
    • The lower leaves of overwatered plants turn yellow and drop.
    • Dry plants wilt and also drop leaves prematurely.

• At Home Care – Holiday Cactus
  • Once home immediately remove the wrapping
  • Place in a location that provides bright, indirect light
  • Temperatures should be 60º to 70ºF, ideally cooler at night
  • Soil should be kept evenly moist during flowering
  • Flower buds will drop if ...
    • They receive too much light
    • Are exposed to drafts or temperature extremes
    • The soil gets too dry or too wet

• At Home Care - Amaryllis
  • Amaryllis grow best in narrow containers.
  • Select one that is 1” wider than the bulb and twice as tall
  • Make sure your container has good drainage to prevent root rot
  • A used dryer sheet in the bottom of the pot will keep the potting material in the pot
• Fill the pot about half full with sterile, new potting soil high in organic matter such as peat moss.
• Set the bulb on top of the potting soil so the top sits above the edge of your container
• Surround the bulb with additional potting soil
• Leave 1/3 to 1/2 of the bulb above the soil line
• Firm the potting medium around the bulb
• Water thoroughly, allowing the excess to drain out.
• Place your new Amaryllis in a sunny window
• Water whenever the top 2 inches of soil feels dry
• Fertilizing is important – use at one half the recommended strength each time you water
• Every fertilizer package provides three numbers like 10-20-15 representing the levels of nutrients
• These numbers represent the percentage of N (nitrogen) – P (phosphorous) – K (potassium)
• Phosphorus is key to flower development
• Chose a fertilizer that has more phosphorus than either nitrogen or potassium
• When buds begin to open, move the plant out of direct sunlight

When the Blooms are Gone
• Blooms are Gone - Poinsettias
  • Consider whether keeping your poinsettia going all year is worth it
  • They’re relatively inexpensive
  • Will the effort be worth it?
  • Do you have enough room both in- and out doors?
  • They won’t necessarily be attractive year-round
  • Many experts would say, cut your losses and put it in your compost pile
  • However, if you want to try here are some dates to help you remember when to do what
  • Tie your care schedule to specific holidays
• New Year’s Day along with starting your resolutions
  • Fertilize with an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer
  • Continue to water and provide adequate light
• Valentine’s Day
  • Check for insects such as white fly – treat if necessary
  • Is your plant leggy? Cut back to about 5 inches
• St. Patty’s Day
  • Cut off faded and dried parts
  • Add more sterile soil mix
  • Keep in a bright interior location
• Memorial Day
• Trim 2 – 3 inches off branches – promotes side branching
• Repot to a larger container using sterile soil mix

• Father’s Day
  • Move plant outside for the summer
  • Place in indirect light – dappled shade

• Fourth of July
  • Trim the plant again
  • Move to full sun location (> 6 hours/day)
  • Fertilize to accelerate growth

• Labor Day
  • Move indoors where it will get < 6 hours of direct sun
  • As new growth starts, reduce amount of fertilizer

• Autumnal Equinox (~September 21)
  • Provide 13 hours of uninterrupted darkness
  • Follow with 11 hours of bright light
  • Maintain night temperatures in the low 60°F range
  • Continue to water and fertilize
  • Rotate the plant daily to give all sides even light

• Thanksgiving
  • Discontinue short day/long night
  • Provide > 6 hours of direct light
  • Reduce water and fertilizer

• Christmas – Enjoy!! (Was it worth it??)

• Blooms are Gone– Holiday Cactus
  • After flowering, place plants in a slightly cooler area and water less frequently.
  • Keep plants on the dry side throughout the winter
  • When active growth begins in spring start watering regularly
  • Fertilize about once a month during spring and summer
  • Holiday Cacti flowering is controlled by temperature and light (or day length)
  • To initiate flowering
    • Place the plants in a cool location (50° to 65°F)
    • Provide only natural light
  • Once you’ve moved them, leave them be
  • Bud drop can occur from:
    • Moving plants around
    • Drafts
    • Excessive watering

• Blooms are Gone – Amaryllis
  • Want to save your bulb for next year?
  • Keep the plants actively growing AFTER the blooms are gone
• Cut the flowers when they fade
• This prevents seed formation
• Reserves important energy for the bulb
• However, leave the stalk until it turns yellow
• Move your plant back to a sunny location
• Continue to water and fertilize
• Come spring move your Amaryllis
• Acclimate it by moving it out to a shady spot
• Slowly move it to its summer home in a sunny location (6 hours minimum/day)
• Plant the Amaryllis (pot and all) in the ground or leave on a patio.
• Fertilize monthly to build up nutrients in the bulb Bring indoors before the first frost as they won’t survive frost or freezing temperatures
• Amaryllis will re-bloom on their own, but ...
• ... you want them to bloom at Christmas
• Put them in a dark location where it’s 50°- 60° F
• Let the leaves dry out and then cut them off
• Leave in the dark for 8-12 weeks without watering
• When new growth appears, the flowering process starts all over again
• If new growth hasn’t started, move the plant to a sunny window
• Amaryllis take 4-6 weeks to bloom
• References
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