

Poinsettia

LEGEND OF THE POINSETTIA

One Christmas Eve long ago, Pepita was sad. The little Mexican girl wanted more than anything to give a fine present to the Christ Child at the church service that evening. But she was very poor and had no gift. As she walked sorrowfully to church with her cousin Pedro, he tried to console her. "Pepita" he said, "I am certain that even the most humble gift, given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes". So Pepita gathered a bouquet of common weeds from the roadside and entered the church. As she approached the altar, her spirits lifted. She forgot the humbleness of her gift as she placed it tenderly at the feet of the Christ Child. Then there was a miracle. Pepita's ordinary weeds burst into brilliant red blooms. They were called Flores de Noche Buena, Flowers of the Holy Night. We call them poinsettias.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Known all over the world as the flower of Christmas, millions of poinsettias are purchased each year by people who enjoy the color and warmth they provide to the home. Poinsettias can easily be decorated with a wicker basket and a bow to make great gifts. This Popular plant, a native of Mexico, has been bred and improved upon greatly over the past few decades. Once there was only a red variety, but today white, pink, salmon and bi-color poinsettias are also available.

LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE

Place in cool, bright location with direct sun and free from drafts or artificial heat. Appliances, (especially television sets) radiators and ventilating ducts produce enough heat and air movement to damage your plants. Poinsettias prefer nighttime temperatures between 55° and 65° and daytime temperatures around 70°.

WATER

Water enough to drain through; check daily and water again when the soil surface becomes dry.

COMMENTS

- Be sure to cover your poinsettia with a protective paper sleeve if you are taking it outside when the temperatures are below 50 degrees. A chilled plant will drop leaves very quickly; a frozen plant will turn black.
- Remove plastic paper or fiber protective sleeves from the plant immediately upon arriving home.
- The top leaves nearest the small yellow flowers are called bracts and turn bright red, (also pink, white, and yellow). The poinsettia is not a poisonous plant. Research has proven that the poinsettia is not lethal to humans and pets. However, your poinsettia and other house plants should be kept out of reach of small children, since varying degrees of discomfort may be experienced if plant parts are ingested.