

A blooming way to say thanks

By Tresa Erickson

At the start of each December, you usually give your neighbors a small gift to say thank you for everything they have done for you. This year, you have decided to give each of them a poinsettia. You're not much of a green thumb and you could use some advice on selecting good plants.



Poinsettias are one of the most popular holiday plants and can be found at a number of garden centers, florist shops and retail stores during November and December. They typically come in red, white, pink and marble, and in order to purchase a healthy

plant, there are several items you need to consider.

First, check out the plant's bracts, or colored leaves. How many are there, and how large are they? The best poinsettias have six or more fairly large bracts that extend over the lower green leaves. Generally, the more bracts the poinsettia has and the larger they are, the more it will cost.

As you inspect the bracts, pay attention to the cyathia, or the green flower parts in the middle. Poinsettias with large cyathia and a lot of yellow pollen and sap have very few days of life left, whereas poinsettias with smaller cyathia and little to no pollen and sap will last longer.

After you have finished with the bracts, check out the condition of the green leaves underneath. These should be in excellent condition and extend over the pot's rim. Drooping leaves may point to an insect infestation and you should avoid purchasing the poinsettia.

If selected properly, poinsettias will last four to six weeks in the home. Of course, the life of the plant hinges on the care it is given. To ensure your neighbors' poinsettias stay in good condition, you might want to give them a list of instructions for caring for it. In order to survive, poinsettias must be placed in a somewhat humid, sunny location away from drafts – 70 to 70 degrees during the day, and 62 to 65 degrees at night is ideal. The soil should be given ample time to dry out and then the poinsettia should be watered periodically with warm water. The poinsettia should never sit in water for more than half an hour, and its bracts should never be misted with water.

Poinsettias make great gifts. Just make sure that your neighbors aren't allergic to plants before you give them a potted poinsettia. 🎁




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