

HOLIDAY 2025 EDITION

HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER

(OB)

Kristin's Comments



Happy Gardening!

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Welcome to the Holiday Edition of the Horticulture Happenings Newsletter! Here's a quick overview of what you'll find in this edition:

- Poinsettias are the most popular flowering plant given around the holidays! Gardeners can find the complete guide to poinsettia facts and care on pages 2 and 3.
- Stay organized with our winter gardening checklist, listed on pages 4 and 5!
- The Warren County Extension Office is also excited to share our newly released Local Holiday Gift Guide! To view the front cover, please turn to page 6. Be sure to follow us on all our social media platforms and blog to see which local businesses and products will be spotlighted!
- Gear up for gardening in 2026 with our new program entitled Garden to Groceries! To find out more details about this upcoming program and how to register, check out page 7.
- Make room at your holiday table with the Sweet Potato Crisp recipe, located on the back of the newsletter!
- Stay up to date with all the latest news by following us on our social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Blog, Podcast, and Radio. See the back page of the newsletter!

Thank you for reading, and happy gardening!

 **Martin-Gatton**
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
University of Kentucky.

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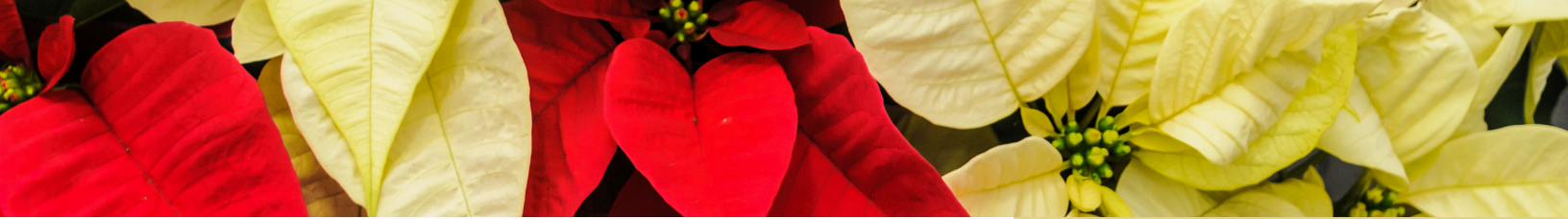
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Growing & Caring for Poinsettias

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

Native to Mexico, poinsettias are members of the Euphorbia family and are a popular holiday plant due to their colorful bracts (modified leaves). There is also a species that is used as a cut flower.

They are most commonly used for decorating during the winter holidays, but are also attractive as green plants throughout the year.

Poinsettias change color in response to shorter days during winter. Poinsettia flowers are made up of the bracts, which look like petals, and the tiny yellow flowers in the center, called cyathia. The colorful bracts attract insects to the flowers and will drop after pollination.

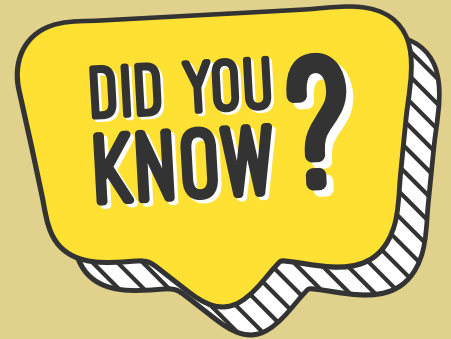
Poinsettias are not harmful to animal or human health. But they should not be eaten.

- The sticky, white sap can cause a skin rash; therefore, gloves are recommended when working with these plants.
- Avoid contact with the eyes and mouth.
- Wash tools thoroughly after use, as the sap can cause them to become sticky.

Poinsettias come in many colors.

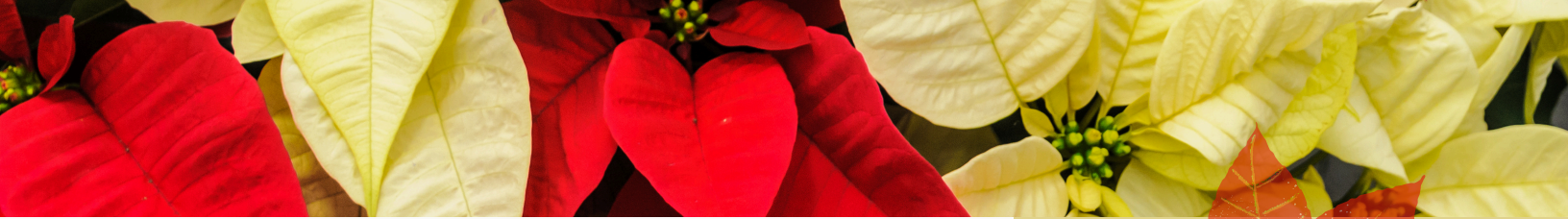
You can find poinsettias around the holidays to fit into almost any decorative scheme. They range from creamy white to pink to the traditional bright red. Some varieties have bracts with patterns in red and white, pink and white, or green and white, and even bright orange.

Flower forms vary as well, with some resembling a rose. You will also find unusually colored poinsettias, such as blue or purple, in garden centers. These are cream-colored varieties that are spray-painted. They are sometimes sprinkled with glitter.



**December 12th
is National
Poinsettia Day,
honoring Joel
Poinsett.**





Growing & Caring for Poinsettias

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

Growing poinsettias

- Light and temperature
 - Indoor light: Place the plant in a south, east, or west-facing window where it will receive bright daylight.
 - Outdoor light: Part sun, 4 to 6 hours daily.
- Temperature:
 - Indoor temperatures between 65°F and 70°F are ideal for optimal comfort.
 - Avoid placing poinsettias in areas where the temperature fluctuates or may be drying, such as near cold drafts, heat ducts, fireplaces, fans, or space heaters.
 - Poinsettias will suffer damage if they are exposed to temperatures below 50°F.
 - Freezing temperatures will kill poinsettias.
- Watering
 - Keep soil moist.
 - Water the plant when the top of the soil feels dry to a light touch, or when the pot feels lightweight when lifted. Never allow poinsettias to get so dry that they wilt.
 - Remove the plant from its decorative foil or outer pot before watering.
 - Ensure your plant is in a pot that allows for free drainage.
 - Place the plant in a sink and water it thoroughly, allowing the excess water to drain completely.
 - Never allow poinsettia pots to sit in excess water. Constant wetness will rot plant roots.
- Fertilizing
 - You do not need to fertilize your poinsettia during the holidays.
 - Start fertilizing your plant when you see new growth (new green leaves, stems, bracts).
 - Fertilize with an all-purpose household plant fertilizer.
 - Mix with water at half the recommended strength.
 - Feed your poinsettia every 3-4 weeks to keep the plant healthy and provide the necessary nutrients for new growth.

**Quick facts:
Poinsettias bloom
when the days get
shorter.**

**The colorful “flowers”
of poinsettias are
actually modified
leaves called “bracts.”**

**Poinsettias are not
poisonous, but the sap
may cause dermatitis.**





Winter Gardening Checklist

SOURCE: MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

- Trees & Shrubs

- Continue watering trees and shrubs, especially evergreens, until the ground freezes.
- Roses should be overwintered after a heavy frost has passed. Place a 6-10 inch layer of mulch over the plant. Prune sparingly, just enough to shorten overly long canes. Climbing roses should not be pruned.
- As the ground is workable, trees and shrubs can be planted. Plant them at the depth at which they grew in the nursery, and no deeper. Remove all wires, ropes, and non-biodegradable materials before back-filling. Add mulch and ensure proper watering until the ground freezes.
- Apply mulch as a “donut” around trees rather than “volcano” mulching, which can cause plant damage, such as root girdling.
- Only female hollies bear the red berries. There must be a male tree nearby for pollination and fruit production.
- Branches of apples, pears, and other rose family plants that were infected with fire blight can be safely pruned off now.
- Be sure the root zones of shrubs are thoroughly mulched. Any organic material will do.
- Live Christmas trees retain their needles longer when a clean, fresh cut is made at the base, and the trunk is always kept standing in water.
- Hollies may be trimmed now. The cuttings can be used in holiday decorations.

- Houseplants

- During winter, houseplants typically need less water than in summer due to fewer hours of sunlight. Err on the side of caution and use tepid water rather than cold. Overly wet soils can increase the number of fungus gnats, which lay eggs in moist soil.
- When purchasing houseplants during winter, be sure to protect their foliage from the cold on the way home. Place plants in a cardboard box or another protective covering to prevent leaf damage.
- On frigid nights, move houseplants back from icy windows to prevent chilling injury.
- Holiday poinsettias do best with bright, indirect light and night temperatures in the 50s-60s. Let the soil dry out slightly between thorough waterings. Please ensure the water can drain and evaporate; if necessary, puncture holes in the decorative foil.





Winter Gardening Checklist

SOURCE: MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

- Fruits & Vegetables
 - Harvest pecans when they start to drop from trees.
 - Add finished compost to garden beds to improve the soil.
 - To prevent diseases from overwintering in the garden, clean up and dispose of diseased plant material.
 - Ensure all spoiled, mummified, and fallen fruit is cleaned up.
 - Mulch strawberries with straw for winter before temperatures drop into the teens. Apply straw loosely, in a thick layer, to hide plants from view.
- Miscellaneous
 - Mulch garden beds to prevent injury to plants from frost heaving and to protect plant roots from severe cold temperatures.
 - Now is a good time to collect soil samples to test for pH and nutrient levels.
 - Clean and winterize yard and garden equipment: roll up and store hoses, shut off outdoor water pipes and valves, and winterize the lawn mower. This is also a good time to clean and oil garden hand tools.
 - Reduce or eliminate fertilizing of houseplants until spring.
 - Warm weather followed by sudden freezing temperatures can damage plants. Some of this damage won't be evident until the next growing season.
 - Be sure to check houseplants and treat them appropriately for spider mites, scale, whiteflies, mealybugs, and fungus gnats.
 - By the end of November or early December, paperwhite narcissus and amaryllis bulbs can be forced indoors. No chilling period is required. Pot up the bulbs and water sparingly until growth begins. They should bloom in 4-6 weeks.
 - Monitor overwintering dormant plants, bulbs, and tubers by ensuring they are not completely dried out or rotting.
 - Check whether any seeds purchased for next season require stratification to germinate. The seed packet should indicate if this process is needed. Some common seeds that require stratification include Asclepias, Echinacea, Rudbeckia, and Baptisia.



CHECK
OUT
THE WARREN
COUNTY
AGRICULTURE
BLOG!



2025 LOCAL HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

**Celebrate the Season,
Support Local.**

*Discover local gifts and
hometown treasures for
everyone on your list!*



 **Martin-Gatton**
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment





Garden to Groceries Program 2026

Garden to Groceries is a practical gardening educational series that makes growing and cooking nutritious food achievable for home gardeners and small-scale growers. It focuses on taking small steps that lead to meaningful changes in your life and community.

Participants will learn how to plan and grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs, troubleshoot common problems, harvest at peak nutrition, and transform their produce into tasty, healthy meals.

What participants will get:

- Seasonal modules (e.g., planning and design; soil health and bed prep; variety selection; pest and disease basics; harvesting and suggested recipes).
- Interactive webinars led by extension and horticulture educators, along with seasonal and nutritional recipes.
- Take-home resources: seed/variety lists, planting calendars, soil test guides, vegetable garden designs, and recipe cards for harvest-to-table meals.

How does the program work?

- Launches on Thursday, January 8th, with an introductory webinar on Garden to Groceries as well as Getting Started.
- The program is hosted over Zoom and offers 11 growing sessions across the growing seasons in Kentucky. All sessions will be held at 12:00 Noon CT.
 - Thursday, January 8th – Program Overview & Getting Started
 - Thursday, February 12th – Sweet Corn
 - Thursday, March 12th – Potatoes
 - Thursday, April 9th – Tomatoes
 - Thursday, May 14th – Cucumbers
 - Thursday, June 11th – Pumpkins
 - Thursday, July 9th – Zucchini/Squash
 - Thursday, August 13th – Strawberries
 - Thursday, September 10th – Lettuce
 - Thursday, October 8th – Garlic
 - Thursday, November 12th – Herbs

Why it matters:

- Homegrown food offers fresher, tastier meals and can significantly reduce grocery bills, making it a cost-effective and healthy choice for families.
- Gardening strengthens community food resilience and supports local agriculture.
- By equipping people with gardening skills, we deepen our impact: more produce is grown and used, reducing waste.

**To register for the
Garden to Groceries
Program, please
scan the QR code
below:**



Sweet Potato Crisp

SOURCE: PLATE IT UP! KENTUCKY PROUD

Ingredients:

- 3 large fresh sweet potatoes, cooked until tender.
- 8 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 2 medium apples, chopped
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup quick cooking oats
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly spray a 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan with nonstick spray.
2. Mash sweet potatoes. Add cream cheese, 2/3 cup brown sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon. Mix until smooth.
3. Spread the sweet potato mixture evenly into the pan.
4. Top sweet potatoes with chopped apples.
5. In a small bowl, combine flour, oats, and 1/3 cup brown sugar. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in pecans.
6. Sprinkle the mixture over the apples.
7. Bake uncovered for 35-40 minutes, or until the topping is golden brown and the fruit is tender.

Yield: 16 servings

Nutritional Analysis: 240 calories; 6g fat; 3g saturated fat; 5mg cholesterol; 200mg sodium; 44g carbohydrate; 4g fiber; 20g sugar; 4g protein.



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