



NEWS TO KNOW DECEMBER 2016

Colorado
State
University

Extension

Custer County

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CUSTER COUNTY 4-H IS ON FACEBOOK!

<https://www.facebook.com/CusterCountyCO4H>

As most of you have Facebook, we are going to become more interactive on our local Facebook page. Like this page and share it with other Custer County 4-H members and watch it for important updates and events.



Custer County Courthouse closures thru end of 2016:

Wednesday, December 21 from 12 Noon to 2 p.m. for Christmas Party

Friday, December 23 & Monday, December 26th for Christmas

Monday, January 2nd, 2017 for New Year's.



Beverly's retiring...well it is finally happening, I am retiring at the end of this year. Lots of events and people that I will definitely miss! If you have the chance, there will be a retirement party for both my husband, Kenneth and myself on Sunday, December 18th from 1-3 p.m. at the multi-purpose room at school. There will be refreshments. Would be great if you can stop by!



National 4-H Congress – Katlyn’s trip to Atlanta! Congratulations to Katlyn Freeburg for her opportunity to attend this event. She went to Atlanta, Georgia around Thanksgiving. Look for the recount of her adventures in next month’s newsletter.

4-H Enrollment – The enrollment process for the 2016-17 4-H year has ended. We will be finalizing all the enrollment forms, order literature and will then be sending letters out to all the families for your final costs. The county enrollment fee is \$25 per member. The literature fees will be based on your actual manuals, record books, etc. that are ordered for any of the projects.

If you have any questions, please stop by or give us a call.

CLUB NEWS: WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR CLUB?

SILVER SPURS: There will be a meeting on December 8th, 2016 at 4:15 p.m. in the Annex Building.

NOTES TO LEADERS: Leaders, when you set your regular monthly club meeting dates, please notify the Extension Office so that we can post it to the calendar and the newsletters. Also, if you have any information that needs to be in any upcoming newsletters, you must have that information into the Extension Office no later than the 25th of the month. ~ Thank You~

ALL THINGS LIVESTOCK: BREEDING AND MARKET

Meat Quality Assurance:

MQA Will Be Required Yearly For ALL 4-H & FFA Market Livestock Members!!

The MQA trailer will be here **February 19, 2017 at 1 p.m. at the Saddle Club Building.** The previous rule was that first year members attend the class and they were to attend again when they turned 14. Please note that ALL 4-H & FFA Market Livestock participants will be required to attend a MQA EVERY YEAR that they are enrolled in a market livestock project from here on out.

BREEDING BEEF: Would you be interested in a Prospect Heifer class at our County Fair? If so, contact us at the Extension Office and let us know that you are interested.

ATTENTION MARKET BEEF EXHIBITORS: Now is the time to start shopping for your beef projects. Your official weigh in will be Sunday January the 8th, 2016, beginning at 1 p.m. Many breeders are preparing to take their fall calf crop to market, be sure to contact your breeder to select your calves before it’s too late!! If you would like information on upcoming club calf sales or breeders who sell to fair kids, contact the extension office.

STATE FAIR LIVESTOCK EXHIBITORS: RETINAL SCANS

If you have animals that will require retinal scans you will need to take them to **Fremont County** this year and the information is below:

Cost is \$5.00 per scan.

LOCATION: Fremont County Fairgrounds

Beef – Saturday, **January 28** beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Sheep – Saturday, **May 13** beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Goats – Saturday, **May 13** beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Upcoming Events and Camps:

For a list of **ALL** upcoming Colorado 4-H Events go to the link below:

http://www.colorado4h.org/events_opportunities/index.php

RoboRAVE COLORADO - The San Luis Valley 4-H program has partnered with RoboRAVE International to bring a low cost robotics contest to Colorado. They will be hosting the second annual RoboRAVE Colorado robotics competition at the Monte Vista High School here in the San Luis Valley on Saturday, April 1.

The contest is open to any youth robotics team (not just 4-Hers) that is working with a robot valued under \$1500. Cost is \$5 per youth to participate. It's a very fun day, and we'll have prizes for top teams in 4 different events (and 3 age divisions).

If you are interested in attending, call or stop by the Extension Office for more information.

National Western Stock Show – January 7-22, 2017

Mark your calendars for Jan. 17 to celebrate 4-H Day at the Stock Show. 4-H will be recognized at the 1:30 p.m. PRCA Rodeo performance that day. Check out their website for tickets and discounts.

4-H Club Officer Training – Will be held on January 21, 2017 in Pueblo. Look for more details and registration information at a later date. **Watch your email for this information!!** If you attended last year and already know what it is about but want to go again, please call the extension office so that we can put you on the list.

Leadership Development Conference (LDC):



4-H Day at the Capitol will take place on Monday, January 30, 2017.

Registration for LDC will be offered through 4HOnline beginning December 5th, 2016. *Interested Members please contact Extension for details!!* http://www.colorado4h.org/events_opportunities/ldc/index.php

Youthfest: February 10-12, 2017: The Colorado State 4-H Senate Officer Team plans and conducts this camp for 4-H members ages 9-13. This event usually happens in February. 4-H members must be between 9 and 13 years of age as of December 31 of the current enrollment year. The purpose of this camp is to provide an opportunity for youth to learn teamwork, leadership, communication, and citizenship skills through a variety of workshops. Registration is through 4HOnline. Registration for this event opens up towards the end of December.

http://www.colorado4h.org/events_opportunities/youthfest/youthfest.pdf

PAST CAMP RECOUNTS & EXPERIENCES:

Grace Watkins reports on her Colorado Leadership Conference experience: I attended the CLC in Glenwood Springs November 4-6, 2016. The purpose of the camp was to provide an opportunity for youth to learn teamwork, leadership, communication, and citizenship skills through a variety of workshops.

The theme this year was "Soaring to Success". Over 300 delegates, grades 6th through 9th, from around the state of Colorado attended the conference. Delegates enjoyed building and flying planes/drones, designing a roller-coaster, filling Christmas Shoe Boxes for the less fortunate children around the world and as always, a 4H dance as a Grand Finale. Please consider attending any and all 4H Camps throughout the year as they provide incredible opportunities!

Dare to be You Camp – Jolene Mullett and Jessie Smith attended the DTBY camp this year!! They were great participants and represented Custer County well!! Both girls had a ton of fun and met a lot of new friends from other counties!!

Are you a 4-H member who loves to design graphic Art? If so, this contest is for you!

Colorado 4-H Horse Show Rule Book Cover Art Contest

Below is information submitted by the State 4-H Horse Committee. They are wanting to update the front of the 4-H Horse Rule Book and are having a contest to select the front cover. If interested...check it out! ***If you choose to submit an entry to this contest please send a copy of your entry to Custer County Extension so we can highlight you in "News to Know".***

- Please submit your 4-H Horse related drawings or sketches via email no later than January 1, 2017. Make sure that your image can be printed in black and white should it be selected as the winner. The winning artwork will be placed on the cover of the updated edition of the Colorado State 4-H Horse Show Rule Book. The winner will also receive a \$150.00 Scholarship to be used towards registration fees for one of the following: State 4-H Horse Show, State 4-H Conference, 4-H Leadership Development Conference, Colorado 4-H Leadership Camp or 4-H Youth Fest. The \$150.00 prize must be used by the winner within 12 months of notification and will be paid directly to any of the above listed events. The \$150.00 Scholarship prize is non-transferable. No money will be issued to the contest winner directly. Please make sure that entries are 4-H appropriate.

Entry Requirements:

- High resolution gif or jpg digital files of pencil or black ink drawing / sketch.
- Entries should be no larger than 8.5" x 11" when printed.
- 4-H appropriate horse related images only.

Please email entries and questions to Sam Lowry at sam.lowry@colostate.edu

4-H NEEDS YOU!

We are looking for volunteers with all different skills. If you would like to help our youth gain the knowledge and skills to become the leaders of tomorrow, then please contact the Extension office.



The Extension Office is looking for BOARD VOLUNTEERS...If you would like to serve a term on one of our boards please come by the extension office for more information.

Project nights are coming. Are you interested in other 4-H projects? Then be on the lookout for Project nights! You will discover all about what projects 4-H has to offer! Remember, 4-H enrollment began on October 16th and ends December 1st. Most projects can be added or dropped until the May 1st deadline.



The Purpose of 4-H Projects

*"Create a blue ribbon child
not a blue ribbon project."*

Life Skills Development

- Decision Making
- Goal Setting
- Planning, Implementing and Evaluating
- Accepting Responsibility
- Communicating
- Teamwork and Cooperation
- Record Keeping

OK Cooperative Extension Service

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Thanks for being a part of the Custer County 4-H family!!!

CUSTER COUNTY 2ND ANNUAL 4-H CAMP – coming soon!

Robin is working on the details and is looking at the beginning part of March for this camp. She will be contacting the teen council members for some help in organizing and putting the workshops. If you are interested, give her a call. IT WAS LOTS OF FUN LAST YEAR!!!

4-H Carnival – coming soon! Look for more details in the next newsletter.

4-H Public Speaking Contest – Practice sessions will begin in February.



Colorado State University, U. S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Individuals requiring special accommodations to participate in any activity, program or service should notify the program coordinator at least 5 business days prior to the scheduled event.

Custer County Drivers - age 15 - 24
Alive At 25 Driver's Awareness Class
Come - Learn - Gain new skills!



Defensive driving classroom curriculum

Gain awareness / develop strategies to keep safe on the road.



Decision-making and responsibility-taking

Learn through interactive media, workbook exercises, role-playing, and class discussions.

Where: Lange Hall, 308 South 3rd Street, Westcliffe
(just north of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church)

When: Friday, December 9, 2016

Time: 9:00 A.M -1:30 P.M.

Must register on-line at <https://aliveat25.us>

Late arrivals will not be allowed to attend.

The Alive at 25 Class is sponsored by the Colorado State Patrol (CSP) and the CSP Family Foundation.



YOUTHFEST-FEBRUARY 10-12, 2017

Family Consumer
Science Projects



Event

Information

Ponderosa Camp Website

Ponderosa Recreational
Release Form

Directions: How to Get To
Ponderosa

YouthFest Flyer

YouthFest Schedule

Code of Conduct

Health Form

What to Bring/ Payment

Background/Eligibility/Registration

Background: The Colorado State 4-H Senate Officer Team plans and conducts this camp for 4-H members ages 9-13. This event usually happens in February.

4-H members must be between 9 and 13 years of age as of December 31 of the current enrollment year.

The purpose of this camp is to provide an opportunity for youth to learn teamwork, leadership, communication, and citizenship skills through a variety of workshops.

Registration is through 4HOnline. Registration for this event opens up towards the end of December.

Chaperoning:

One adult/ten youth must be present from each group represented by participants to provide supervision. If both male and female campers are in attendance, a female and a male chaperon must accompany the local delegation unless special arrangements have been made in advance with another group.

Cost:

Agent/Chaperone/Volunteer-Leader (Adults): \$120

Camper (Youth): \$120

Counselor (16 and older): \$75

State Officers: No Fee

Tips for a Healthy Holiday Season

Glenda Wentworth, Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent, Eagle County

For back issues visit the Family Matters Web site At www.ext.colostate.edu/Pubs/fammatrs/fmmenu.html

For more information contact the CSU Extension office nearest you, or visit our Web site at: www.ext.colostate.edu

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Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.

The holiday season is generally a time for celebrating with friends and family. It is also the time we indulge in all of our traditional holiday goodies. Many of these foods are full of sugar and fat. Because they are only available during the holiday season, we look forward to eating them.

So how can we keep from putting on pounds and still enjoy our holiday traditions? Portion control is the answer. There is no need to exclude your holiday favorites. Knowing when to stop eating is the key. Small cuts in calories here and there can make a big difference to avoid that dreaded holiday weight gain.

Strategies to help you avoid overeating:

- Use a smaller plate. It encourages less food and proper portion sizes.
- Start your day with a healthy breakfast. Include whole grains, fruit, low-fat dairy, and protein such as eggs, ham, or peanut butter. Eating breakfast can control appetite during the day.
- Eat balanced meals. Have a small taste of everything, but fill up on fruits and vegetables. Choose vegetables and fruits that have a variety of colors and nutrients.
- Eat slowly. Savor every bite. Before you go back for seconds wait ten minutes to see if you really are still hungry.
- Choose water or low-fat milk instead of sugar-sweetened drinks. Fruits or vegetables steeped in water are a "flavorable" alternative. Another healthy option is unsweetened tea and herbal tea.
- Carry healthy snacks in your purse or car. This helps avoid visiting the drive-thru while doing errands. Snacks that are nutrient dense are the best. Almonds are easy, travel well and have a lot of great nutrients.



Tips to help you reduce sugar and fat in recipes:

- You can reduce the amount of sugar in most recipes by 25 percent without much change to the flavor of the product. Try adding cinnamon or vanilla to recipes to give the idea of sweetness.
- Replace half of the fat or oil in baked goods recipes (except cookies) with unsweetened applesauce.
- Use low-fat or fat-free versions of milk, cheese, yogurt, sour cream and cream.

Let's Talk

With kids on holiday break, this is a perfect time to teach your child about preparing food. In addition to being fun, kids will learn important skills and old family recipes. Seeing family and friends enjoying their creations boosts self-esteem. Start with simple techniques like rolling dough, using a cookie cutter or spreading frosting. As you are preparing food, explain different methods of cooking and their purpose.

Age specific tasks children can handle:

Three year olds: Wash fruits and vegetables, stir ingredients in a bowl, tear lettuce and pour liquids

Four year olds: Grease pans, open packages, peel oranges or hard-cooked eggs, snip fresh herbs with dull scissors and mash bananas with a fork

Five and six year olds: Stir mixtures, snap green beans, prepare lettuce for a salad, press cookie cutters, pour liquids and measure ingredients

Seven and eight year olds: Rinse vegetables, mix and shake ingredients, beat eggs, measure dry ingredients, roll and shape cookies

Nine and 10 year olds: Knead bread dough, stir hot mixtures, blend batters, broil foods in toaster oven, and cut foods with a table knife

Children age 10 and older: Slice or chop vegetables, boil potatoes, microwave foods, bake foods in the oven, and simmer ingredients on the stove.



Physical Activities:

During the holidays, physical activity is one thing we let slip so that we can get everything accomplished on our list. However, one of the best things you can do is stay active during the holidays. It can help relieve stress, regulate appetite, and burn up extra calories from holiday eating. Being physically active takes planning any time of year, but especially during the holiday season. Here are some fun ways to stay active as a family in the winter months.

- Walking around to view the festive lights
- Ice skating
- Snowball fights
- Shoveling snow; provide a kid sized shovel to the smaller family members
- Skiing/snowboarding
- Building snowmen, snow caves, etc.
- Sledding
- Snowshoeing
- Blowing bubbles and watching them turn to "ice bubbles"
- Looking for animal tracks

Recipe for Health:

Black Bean Brownies

Ingredients:

- 1 can (15 to 16 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 3 eggs
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. cocoa powder
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. white sugar
- 1 tsp. instant coffee (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease an 8- by 8-inch baking dish.
Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips in a blender; blend until



Photo compliments of
NDSU Extension

smooth; pour mixture into prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with chocolate chips. Bake in preheated oven until top is dry and sides start to pull away from the baking dish; about 30 minutes.

Makes 16 servings: Per serving: 140 calories, 6 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 20 g carbohydrate and 105 mg sodium.

Recipe featured by: North Dakota State University Extension Service
@ http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/globalfood/Visual%20Recipe_BlackBean-Brownies.pdf

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods...

FYI - DECEMBER 2016

Beverly's retiring...well it is finally happening. I am retiring at the end of this year. Lots of events and people that I will definitely miss! If you have a chance, there will be a retirement party for both my husband, Kenneth and myself on Sunday, December 18th from 1-3 p.m. at the multi-purpose room at school. There will be refreshments available. Hope you will be able to stop by and visit.

2017 IRM REDBOOKS ARE HERE!! Hello Ranchers, if you are looking for your new redbooks, we have them at the Extension Office. Come by Monday-Friday, 8:00 to 4:00 to pick them up.

SEEDLING TREE SALES - Applications to purchase seedling trees from the Colorado State Forest Service will soon be available. For best selection, the earlier you place your order the better chance you will have to get the trees that you want. Give us a call or email us to request an application and we will get one out to you as soon as we receive this year's application.

BACKYARD POTATO GROWERS...We need your forms ASAP Please -

~~Call if you have any questions about the forms to be returned or if you have any other potato questions.~~

Holiday Lights...

Running festive holiday lights doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. Light emitting diode (LED) technology can be used in place of incandescent holiday light bulbs to keep electricity costs low during the holiday season.

A string of 125 large C7 incandescent bulbs using 4 watts per bulb would use 500 watts when turned on. A string of 300 miniature incandescent bulbs using 0.4 watts each would use 120 watts when turned on. In contrast, a string of 300 LED bulbs using 0.04 watts each would use only 12 watts when turned on.

If each of these strings ran for 12 hours per day over a 40 day period, the C7 incandescent string would cost a typical homeowner \$24, the miniature incandescent string would cost \$5.76, and the LED string would cost 57 cents! Homeowners running multiple strings can experience even greater savings. The increased up-front cost of the LED lights can typically be offset in two to three holiday seasons when compared to mini-incandescent lights.

Other advantages of using LED holiday lights include:

- their long life span (typically 20,000 hours or 40 holiday seasons);
- their cool temperature (reducing the risk of fire); and
- reduced risk of overloading the wall socket when connecting multiple strings.

The US Department of Energy estimates that if every household used LED holiday lights in place of incandescent lights, the country would save over \$410 million in electricity costs.

Poinsettias

Fact Sheet No. 7.412

Gardening Series | Flowers

by S.E. Newman and B. E. Edmunds*

History and Description

The Aztecs cultivated the poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) in Mexico long before Europeans came to the Western Hemisphere. It was cultivated in Oaxatpec, which is now the Mexican state Morelos. The poinsettia was prized by Kings Netzahualcyotl and Montezuma and its indigenous name was Cuetzlaxochitl. The Aztecs used the bracts for a reddish-purple dye and the latex to counteract fever. The plant also played a part in midwinter celebrations representing purity and blood sacrifices. It was widely planted in gardens.

Franciscan priests during the 17th century near Taxco observed the plant blooming during the Christmas season. They incorporated the plant into the Fiesta of Santa Pesebre nativity procession. They used the concept of blood sacrifices from Aztec tradition to have the poinsettia represent the blood of Christ to Catholics and Christians. Poinsettias bloom naturally in October signaling the coming of Christmas.

Joel R. Poinsett, a botanist and the first U.S. minister to Mexico under President James Monroe in 1825, sent some plants to his home in South Carolina. He shared his finds with other plant enthusiasts. December 12 is National Poinsettia Day and recognizes Poinsett's contribution to the holiday season.

Many people have been instrumental in establishing poinsettias as a house plant and holiday tradition. The Paul Ecke, Sr. originally grew poinsettias as a cut flower in the Hollywood and Beverly Hills area in the 1920s. After moving to Encinitas, CA, the Ecke family focused on field grown poinsettia mother plants, which were shipped throughout the country via railroad box cars.

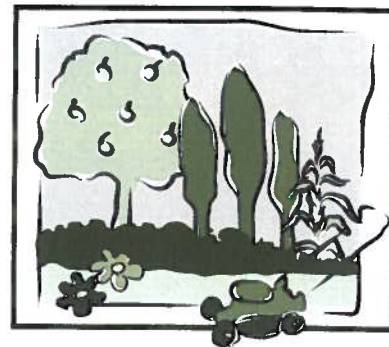
Paul Ecke, Jr. took poinsettias to the next level in the 1960s through media promotions, specifically the Tonight Show and the Bob Hope Christmas Specials. This constant effort ensured that poinsettias were as much a part of the holiday season as evergreen trees, Christmas cards, and caroling. It was at this time that the Ecke family moved from field production to greenhouse production, which created the need for improved cultivars.

Active breeding of the poinsettia began in the 1950s in an effort to develop cultivars that would retain their leaves and bracts for a longer period. Early breeding efforts included those of Mikkelsen of Ohio (Mikkelsen series), the Heggs of Norway (Hegg series), as well as those of the Ecke family (Eckespoint series). The Fischer family, a German breeder, has also contributed many cultivars to the poinsettia tradition. These breeding programs focused on stronger stems, leaf and bract retention, multiple branching, earlier blooming, and color variation.

Modern cultivars are now bred to last longer in the home, bloom earlier, and require fewer resources for production. This translates into more color selections and better quality plants for consumers. Poinsettias are available in a vast array of colors from red to white, pink to burgundy, and with many variations in between including flecks of color on contrasting backgrounds.

Selection

Poinsettias do well in the home and keep their color until mid-March. The showy red, pink, white, yellow, bicolored or speckled modified "leaves" are called bracts. With proper light and temperature, they accumulate the anthocyanin pigments that give them their color. The flowers (cyathia) of the poinsettia are in the center of the bracts. Male and female parts are present, along



Quick Facts

- Select plants with uniformly green foliage and no lower leaves missing.
- Poinsettias need moderately moist soil; water thoroughly whenever the soil feels dry to the touch.
- Ideal temperatures are 60 to 70°F.
- Poinsettia plant parts are not edible, but they are not poisonous when eaten.
- Those whom are sensitive to latex, may develop a rash when handling poinsettias.

*S.E. Newman, Colorado State University Extension greenhouse crops specialist and professor, horticulture and landscape architecture; and B.A. Edmunds, regional Extension specialist - commercial greenhouses and nurseries. Original author, K.L. Goldsberry, horticulture professor emeritus, horticulture and landscape architecture. 11/09

Disease and Pest Control

Many pests can infest poinsettias. Wash off insects with mild soap and water, using a sponge or gentle spray. Mealybugs and whiteflies may require pesticide application or removal of infested plant parts. To remove mealybugs, apply ordinary rubbing alcohol with a cotton swab.

Cold, moist soil temperatures encourage root diseases. If lower leaves start turning yellow and fall off, a root rot condition may exist. Apply an all-purpose fungicide (usually available at garden centers) as a soil drench. The milky sap that exudes from a poinsettia when damaged is called latex and is not the result of any insect or disease infestation.

with a yellow-edged nectary with sweet, fragrant nectar.

Poinsettias come in many colors and forms. New selections appear every year. Choose a plant with uniformly dark green foliage. However, cultivars with lighter colored or mottled bracts typically have lighter green foliage.

Plants with pale green, yellow or fallen leaves generally have a root disease problem, have been overwatered, had an excessive dry period, or received limited fertilization. Bracts should be well developed with little pollen showing on the flowers.

When outside temperatures approach 35F, be sure the plant is well wrapped or sleeved before transporting. Low temperatures, even for short periods, can damage leaves and bracts. Remove sleeves promptly to prevent epinasty, a downward bending of the petioles, which are the slender stalks that attach the bracts to the stem.

Cultural Requirements

Poinsettias thrive on indirect, natural daylight -- at least six hours a day. Avoid direct sunlight, as this may fade the bract color. If direct sun cannot be avoided, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain. To prolong color, keep plants out of traffic areas and protect from cold drafts

and excessive heat. Ideal temperatures are 67F to 70F during the day and 60F to 62F at night. Remove damaged or diseased leaves.

Poinsettias require moderately moist soil. Check plants daily and water thoroughly whenever the soil feels dry to the touch. Plants in clay pots require more water, while those in plastic pots are easily overwatered. Apply water until it runs out the drainage hole. However, do not allow poinsettias to sit in standing water. If the container is wrapped with foil, remove it when watering or make a hole in it for drainage. Discard any collected water in the drainage receptacle.

A poinsettia does not require fertilization while it is in bloom. However, to maintain green foliage and promote new growth indoors after the holidays, apply a balanced all-purpose house plant fertilizer once per month. Always follow the directions on the fertilizer label.

Reflowering

To "reflower" poinsettias for the next year, strictly follow these simple steps. After a plant has passed its stage of usefulness, usually by late March or early April, remove the bracts and part of the stem. This cutting back can be done any time through mid-July, depending on the desired final size and shape of the plant. Leave three or four leaves on each remaining stem.

During late spring and early summer, move the plant to the next larger size pot. Use a well-drained potting medium, preferably heat-pasteurized. Use any well-drained soil, such as a blend of equal parts sphagnum peat moss, vermiculite and/or perlite. Thoroughly mix 1 tablespoon of treble superphosphate fertilizer (0-46-0) in



Figure 2: Use a wastebasket or opaque box to keep the plant in darkness for 14 hours a day. Start October 1 and continue until color shows in top bracts.

each gallon of soil mix. Apply a slow release fertilizer to the soil surface.

Prune tall growth at approximately six-week intervals to keep the plant well formed. The last pruning or pinch before flowering should occur in late August. The poinsettia is a naturally-woody-plant that easily can be trained into many shapes during summer pruning. Consider a poinsettia tree, hanging basket or other artistic creation. Just remember to heed the last pinching date and the darkness requirement to achieve your masterpiece by the holidays.

Indoors, place the poinsettia in a bright area where the temperature will remain constant. Water as needed and fertilize with a complete fertilizer every two to three weeks. During the summer, the plant may go outdoors in a partly shaded area. After the danger of frost is past in the spring, and minimum temperatures reach 55F, place the plant on the patio or sink it into the ground. It prefers a well-drained, slightly shaded location (see Figure 1). Turn the pot once a week to prevent roots from growing through the drainage hole. Bring plants into the house when night temperatures are colder than 55F (approximately September 1 in Colorado).

Poinsettias are short-day photoperiodic plants. This means they set buds and produce flowers as the autumn nights lengthen, blooming naturally during November or December. To flower and develop colored bracts, a poinsettia must

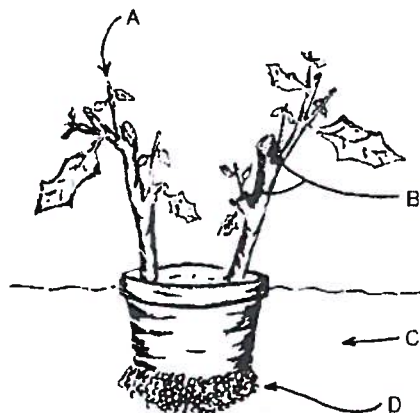


Figure 1: A poinsettia plant pruned, pinched and placed outdoors after danger of spring frosts. A: New shoots pinched in late August. B: Early summer pruning. C: Garden soil. D: Gravel.

receive as much sunshine as possible during the day. Starting about October 1, it also needs at least 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness each night at temperatures between 60F and 70F. Stray light of any kind (street lights, pool lights or lamps) could delay or entirely halt the reflowering process. The dark treatment should last until color shows in the bracts (approximately Thanksgiving). Some modern cultivars may show color as much as two weeks before Thanksgiving. Continue fertilizing and watering to encourage good growth.

Poinsettia Not Poisonous

In a 1995 poll funded by the Society of American Florists, 66 percent of the respondents held the false impression that poinsettia plants are toxic if eaten. Research at Ohio State University in 1971 showed that rats fed unusually high doses of poinsettia plant parts were not adversely affected. The POISINDEX*

Information Service, the primary resource used by most poison control centers, states that a 50-pound child would have to eat more than 500 poinsettia bracts to surpass experimental doses. Based on the rodent tests, accepted by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the commission denied a 1975 petition filed by a New York citizen demanding that poinsettia plants carry caution labels that indicate they are poisonous.

Like other non-food items, poinsettia plants are not edible and are not intended to be eaten. Poinsettias are a member of the Euphorbiaceae family of plants. Other economically important species in this family include: The cultivated rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis*, Manioc or cassava (*Manihot*), and Castor bean (*Ricinus*). With its close genetic ties to the rubber tree, which is where natural latex is derived, those who are sensitive may also be sensitive to the latex from poinsettias. If eaten, parts of all plants may cause varying

degrees of discomfort, but not death. Keep plants out of reach of small children.

Although commonly assumed to be poisonous to animals, Poinsettia plants are not harmful to household pets unless the leaves and bracts are eaten in very large quantities. Some cats that chew on the leaves may salivate and can vomit if the leaves are swallowed. Since cats and puppies frequently chew on new plants introduced to the home, it is prudent to place the plants out of reach!

References

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