

POINSETTIAS

It's hard to imagine the Christmas season without the extraordinary beauty of poinsettias. Poinsettia is a member of the botanical family Euphorbia. It was first cultivated by the Aztecs in Mexico and was called Cuetlaxochitl.

The brilliant colored petal, (which is actually a leaf-like bract) were used to make a red dye, while the white "sap" was used medicinally.

During the 17th century, a Franciscan priest in Mexico discovered the poinsettia. Because of the plants' holiday colors, the priests began using them in their nativity procession. Not until 1825 was the first poinsettia introduced to the United States by Joel Roberts Poinsett. Poinsett was the first United States ambassador to Mexico, and while visiting there, he found the plants growing on the hillsides and bought them to his home in South Carolina where he propagated a crop of them. Poinsett shared his discovery with friends, family, horticulturists and botanical gardens.

In 1906, Albert Ecke, an immigrant from Germany, moved his family to what is now called Hollywood and started a nursery. Years later, he specialized in the production of poinsettias. The Ecke family is responsible for much of today's poinsettia popularity. Ecke's company, called Paul Ecke Poinsettias, was instrumental in development, distribution and popularity. Many novel varieties available today include: Jingle Bells, Freedom, Lilo, Celebrate, Pink Peppermint and Lemon Drops.



Choosing the Perfect Poinsettia

There are a few characteristics a consumer should look for when choosing a poinsettia. First, study the cyathia, which are the tiny yellow flowers in the center of the bracts. It is important that the flowers are only slightly open to ensure that the Poinsettia has not passed its prime. Second, choose a plant which has mature, fully colored showy bracts and is not streaked with green. Lastly, every poinsettia variety is slightly different, however, the general nursery industry standard for the number of bracts per plant is: a 6 inch pot has 5 to 6 bracts and a 4 inch pot has 3 to 4 bracts.



The Legend of the Poinsettia

There once was a little Mexican girl named Pepita. She was very sad. Pepita wanted more than anything to give a fine present to the Christ child at the church service on Christmas Eve. She was a poor orphan and had no gift to present. As Pepita walked sorrowfully to the 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 to his eyes."

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 that she placed tenderly at the feet of the Christ Child, and 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. Today we call them Poinsettias.

-as told by George Munana



Nick Williams Designs– Outdoor Room & Fireplace with Poinsettia

Poinsettia Varieties

Name	Color	Characteristic
Eckespoint Freedom	Red	Dark green foliage & dark red bracts
Gross Subjibi	Red, Pink	Bright colored bracts & strong branches
Eckespoint Celebrate	Red, Pink, White	Erect bracts, resists drooping
Gutbier V 14 Glory	Red, Pink, White	Responds well to highlight & warm temp
Gutbier v-7 Angelika	Red, White, Marble (pink & white)	Vivid, lucid color
Eckespoint Lilo	Red, Pink, White, Marble (pink & white)	Dark Foliage w/bright bracts, long lasting
Annette Hegg	Dark Red, Top White Hot Pink	Bright colored bracts
Eckespoint Pink Peppermint	Pink with Red flecks	Bract is large & flat wiht open center
Eckespoint Jingle Bells	Red with Pink flecks	Medium sized bracts
Eckespoint Lemon Drop	Yellow	Dark foliage, short heights, need protection from sun

