



Virginia Green Industry Council

For Immediate Release

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POINSETTIA IS A BEAUTIFUL, SAFE HOLIDAY PLANT

One of the most popular Christmas plants is the Poinsettia. Introduced to the United States in 1825 by Joel Robert Poinsett, who was the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, the colorful plant came from the wilds of southern Mexico. The common name for the exotic plant, poinsettia, came from his last name. With the introduction of long-lasting varieties, the popularity of the poinsettia has increased significantly, says Lin Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council.

Because the plant is somewhat tropical, it requires daily care to remain beautiful in our homes during the holiday season. Diacont recommends the following care instructions to keep the plant beautiful through the season:

Dos and Don'ts of Poinsettia Care

- DO place the plant in indirect sunlight at least six hour per day. A sunny window facing south, east, or west is better than one facing north.
- DO provide room temperatures between 68 and 70° during the daylight hours and, if possible, move it to a cooler place at night that is not any lower than 50°.
- DO water your plant when the soil feels dry to the touch. Check daily. A wilted plant may drop its leaves prematurely. Remove the colorful foil wrapper or decorative container and place the plant on a saucer so that the water can run out the drain hole. Discard the water that collects.
- DO use a large, roomy shopping bag to protect the plant when transporting it.
- DON'T place plants near cold drafts, excessive heat, appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.
- DON'T let any part of the plant touch the cold windowpanes because this may injure it.
- DON'T expose plant to temperatures below 50° because they are sensitive to the cold.
- DON'T overwater the plant or allow it to sit in standing water.
- DON'T fertilize your plant when it is in bloom. Wait until new growth appears several months later.

Diacont emphasizes that despite a common legend the Poinsettia is **NOT** poisonous. Over the years the general public has come to believe that Poinsettias are poisonous. The scientific evidence from universities around the country demonstrates that the Poinsettia is safe and the old wives' tale that Poinsettias are poisonous is false. Studies conducted by The Ohio State University in cooperation with the Society of American Florists concluded that no toxicity was evident at experimental ingestion levels far exceeding

those likely to occur in the home environment. The information resource used by most poison control centers states that a 50-pound child would have to eat over 500 poinsettia brackets to match the experimental doses and even at this high level, no toxicity was demonstrated.

In fact, in 1992, the poinsettia was included in a list of houseplants most helpful in removing pollutants from indoor air. So not only is the Poinsettia a safe and beautiful addition to the holiday décor, it can help keep your indoor air clean.

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

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