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# HOLIDAY SELECTION & CARE OF PLANTS

**wwe**<sup>®</sup>

## SELECTION TIPS

- Plants with dark, healthy, fully colored leaves free of yellow leaves, brown leaf edges and spots
- Plants with a few open flowers, some buds showing color and rest healthy, plump buds
- Free of insects and disease
- Appear to be well cared for

## TRANSPORT WITH CARE

- Once you select your holiday plants, make sure they are carefully wrapped to protect it from the cold on its journey home
- Rewrap the plant anytime you move it outdoors and never leave it sitting in a cold car while running errands
- A chilled plant looks fine until it thaws. By the next day the plant turns a funny shade of green, wilts and eventually dies.

## GENERAL CARE FOR FLOWERING PLANTS

- Place the plant in a **cool, brightly lit location**. The cool temperatures and indirect light help the blooms last longer.
- Avoid drafts of hot and cold air. These can dry or chill the plant resulting in leaf drop.
- Remove or fold down the foil wrap, if present, to let the sunlight reach all leaves
- Water thoroughly when the top inch or two of soil just starts to dry. Most plants prefer slightly moist soil, like a damp sponge that has been wrung out, when in bloom.
- Pour out any water that collects in the foil, basket or saucer. Or, place pebbles in the bottom of the foil, basket or saucer to elevate the plant above the excess water.
- **Remove spent flowers** from mums, cyclamen and kalanchoes. This keeps the plant looking fresh and often encourages more blooms.

## POST FLOWERING CARE

- Remove faded flowers
- Move plants to a bright location
- Continue to water thoroughly, but most require less frequent watering when not in bloom
- Fertilize with dilute flowering houseplant fertilizer when actively growing
- Compost or give to a gardening friend and start over next year

## Utility-friendly Tree Planting Tips from We Energies

Trees growing too close to power lines can cause sparks, fires, power outages and shock hazards. To avoid these problems, plant trees that won't interfere with power lines when fully grown. Small ornamental trees or shrubs that will not exceed 15 feet in height such as serviceberry, dogwood and low-growing evergreens are best to plant around power lines. Trees such as maple, basswood, burr oak, white pine or spruce grow more than 40 feet high and should be planted more than 50 feet from any overhead power lines.

And don't forget to call 811 at least three days before planting to check the location of underground services.

Learn more utility-friendly planting tips at [we-energies.com](https://www.we-energies.com).



# **POINSETTIA**

- **Poinsettias are not toxic, but are an irritant, so best to keep away from curious kids and pets**
- The true flowers are small, at the tip of the stem and surrounded by colorful bracts we call flowers. Select plants with unopened flower buds or fresh, yellow flowers. Avoid those with dried up flowers.
- Remove the protective sleeve as soon as you arrive home. The upward bent leaves release ethylene that decreases the longevity of the colorful display.

## **CARING FOR YOUR POINSETTIA**

- Bend down or remove foil if needed so light reaches all leaves
- Place in cool, bright location free of drafts
- Keep soil slightly moist (just starting to dry an inch or two below the soil surface)
- **Poinsettia Care**

## **POST HOLIDAY CARE**

- Move your plant to a sunny window when the holidays have passed
- Fertilize with a dilute solution of flowering plant fertilizer and water as needed. Grow like other houseplants if you want to continue to enjoy your plant.
- **Prune back the plant** in mid to late March if you plan on keeping it throughout the year or plan on giving it lots of space next winter
- Move the plant outdoors or grow it in a sunny window throughout the summer
- Place the plant in a cool, totally dark location for 14 hours each night starting October 1<sup>st</sup> and then back into a bright location during the day
  - Or cover with a box at night
  - **Reblooming Your Christmas Cactus and Poinsettia**
- Stop the treatment once the colorful bracts are fully colored
- Each missed nightly treatment delays bloom by one day. Too many missed days may mean a beautiful poinsettia for Valentine's Day.

## **Landscaping Around We Energies Utilities**

Plants and other landscaping features can interfere with utility equipment and cause safety risks. Remember to:

**Maintain equipment visibility:** Use techniques that camouflage rather than hide utility equipment. Hearty grasses and/or flowers are preferred. They provide aesthetic improvements and grow back quickly should equipment access be necessary.

**Ensure easy access:** When fencing is used, choose a split-rail type, which can be easily dismantled when equipment access is needed. Be sure fences are located more than 3 feet from transformer sides and no permanent fence post is located in front of transformer door.

**Keep proper clearance:** When woody shrubs or bushes are used, place them more than 3 feet from transformer sides and more than 10 feet from its door. Keep future growth in mind for the size of shrubs or bushes.

Learn more utility-friendly planting tips at [we-energies.com](http://we-energies.com).

# CHRISTMAS CACTUS

- Display your Christmas cactus in a bright location free of drafts of hot and cold air
  - Flower bud and blossom drop is caused by drafts, moisture stress and environmental changes. Avoid or minimize these to **reduce the risk of blossom drop**.
- Keep the soil slightly moist when flowering and drier to the touch when not in bloom
- Fertilize spring through summer with a dilute solution of flowering houseplant fertilizer
- **Rebloom your Christmas cactus** along with your poinsettia. Start October 1<sup>st</sup> by giving the plant 14 hours of total darkness each night and bright light during the day. Cooler night temperatures and slightly drier soil seems to increase success.
- **The difference between Christmas (small, smooth segments), Thanksgiving (toothed segments) and Easter cactus (blooms as days begin to lengthen, more rounded leaves)**

# KALANCHOE

- **Keep this plant away from cats, dogs and birds**
- Grow flowering kalanchoes in a cool (50 - 70°) bright location and with temperatures a bit cooler at night
  - **Low Maintenance Kalanchoes**
- Water thoroughly when the top inch of soil is just starting to feel dry
- Remove faded flowers for a second flush of blooms
- Grow this like other succulents when it is not flowering. Place in a sunny window and allow the top inch of soil to dry before watering thoroughly.
- Rebloom your kalanchoe like Christmas cactus. Stop providing the dark period when the buds are fully developed.

# CYCLAMEN

- **Keep away from dogs, cats and horses**
- Select plants with stiff flower stems and only a few open buds
- Cool, bright location, keep soil moist, over and under watering can lead to failure
- Fun way to display - remove the plant from the pot, rinse off potting mix and display in a vase with the roots in the water and plant held above the water
- After flowering the leaves may start to yellow. Don't fret, the plant is going into its rest period.
  - Stop watering and once all leaves are yellow and dry move to a cool, dark location to rest for several months. Then begin watering and move back to a brightly lit location
  - Or repot your cyclamen to a slightly larger container in place of dormant treatment. Plant it so half the tuber is above the soil surface and fertilize.



## About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening, the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, and Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series, including the latest Food Gardening for Everyone DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

## AZALEA GIFT PLANT

- **Keep away from dogs and cats**
- **Keep Azalea Gift Plants Blooming and Healthy Indoors**
- Grow azalea gift plants indoors year round or summer outdoors
- Grow in a sunny window when not in bloom. Prune and shape as needed spring or early summer once flowering is complete.
- Fertilize spring through mid summer with dilute solution of flowering houseplant food
- Plants summered outdoors
  - Gradually transition them outside to a shaded location
  - Move them back indoors before the first frost
  - Place in cool location of 40-50° to complete flower bud formation for better bloom

## JERUSALEM CHERRY & CHRISTMAS PEPPER

- **Keep this plant away from dogs, cats and horses**
  - The peppers from pesticide-free plants are edible, but typically very hot. It's the leaves and stems that are toxic and the capsaicin in hot peppers that can cause discomfort. So, best to just enjoy their beauty.
  - The fruits on the Jerusalem cherry are **NOT** edible

### JERUSALEM CHERRY

- Grow in a warm, brightly lit location free of drafts
- Water thoroughly when the soil surface is dry but before plants wilt
- Begin fertilizing in spring if you plan on keeping the plant through the summer

### CHRISTMAS PEPPER

- Bright location with at least several hours of direct sun
- Daytime temperatures around 70° and slightly cooler at night
- Keep soil slightly moist, but not soggy wet. Allowing leaves to reach wilting point means you need to water a bit more often.
- Same care as other decorative plants

# ANTHURIUM

- **Keep away from dogs, cats and horses**

- Long blooming (I have had one producing flowers for a year). The colorful heart shaped parts we call flowers are actually modified leaves
- These epiphytes are usually grown in pots of soil, but sometimes anchored to stones
- Grow in a brightly lit location for best flowering
- Water thoroughly and often enough to keep the roots from drying. Allow soil to dry slightly, but do not allow plants to wilt and don't overwater, that can lead to root rot.
- These plants need minimal fertilization
  - **Anthuriums for Valentine's Day and Indoor Gardens**

# BROMELIADS

- Another epiphyte grown in a well-drained potting mix or grown as an air plant
- Long blooming, providing months of colorful flowers
- Place plants with stiff leaves in bright light, those with pliable leaves tolerate low light
- Water often enough to prevent roots from drying
  - **Air plants** - soak in tepid water every week or two
  - Tank types - keep leaf cup full of water and refresh regularly
  - Those grown in soil - water thoroughly and often enough to prevent roots from drying
- Boost the humidity around these plants
  - Place them with other plants so as one plant transpires (loses moisture through its leaves) the neighboring plants benefit
  - Set on a gravel tray - fill saucer or tray with pebbles. Set the pot on top of the pebbles above the water. As the water evaporates, it increases the humidity around the plant

## **POST FLOWERING CARE**

- As flowers fade the parent plant eventually dries up and dies
- It does produce offsets (small plants)
  - You can leave the offsets in the original pot
  - Or remove from the pot, divide and plant each offset in its own container

## **REBLOOMING**

- Grow offsets to mature size
- Place mature plant in plastic bag with slice of apple for 3 days
  - The apple gives off ethylene that initiates flowering
- Continue providing proper care and wait for flowers to form

## **MOTH ORCHIDS** (*Phalaenopsis*)

- These are epiphytes usually grown in an orchid mix
- Long blooming plants that can flower for months
- Moth orchids are easiest as they are most adapted to household environments
- Grow flowering plants in bright light
- Water thoroughly - usually once a week depending on indoor growing conditions
  - Skip the ice cube, use tepid water for best results
  - **Easy Care for Long Blooming Orchids**
- These prefer high humidity
  - Place with other plants
  - Set on gravel trays

### **REBLOOMING**

- You have several options for reblooming your moth orchid
  - Leave flower stems intact and you may get a second smaller flush of flowers
  - Cut the flower stem back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> node and a new flower stem should emerge
  - Cut the flower stem back to leaves, it can take a year for new flowers to form, but it is best option for plant

## **CHRISTMAS ROSE** (*Helleborus niger*)

- **Keep away from children, dogs, cats and horses**
- Cool, bright light is key to success - move plants to a cooler spot if it begins to decline
- Water thoroughly when top inch of potting mix is dry
- Gardeners in Zone 3 to 8 can move the plant into the garden as danger of frost has passed
  - Grow in a partially shaded location and moist, well-drained soil
  - This hellebore blooms between December and April depending on your location
  - **Christmas Rose Planting and Care**

## **NORFOLK ISLAND PINE**

- High light for best growth and minimize new growth stretching and creating a lopsided plant
- Turn plant regularly for even growth
- Keep soil slightly moist and humidity high to avoid browning and dead branches
  - Place on gravel tray for lower maintenance and better results
- Fertilize actively growing plants with dilute houseplant fertilizer spring through fall as needed
- Air layer misshapen plants to regain beauty
- **Pruning Norfolk Island Pine**

## TABLETOP SPRUCE

- Keep the tree dormant by placing in a very cool location
- Provide bright light and water as needed
- Gradually introduce to outdoors
  - If buds break dormancy, keep inside until danger of frost has passed
  - If still dormant or gardening in mild climate, you can move outside
- Depending on the variety, hardiness and suitability to the growing conditions, you may be able to plant it in the landscape

## ROSEMARY

- Rosemary topiaries are popular holiday plants

### GROWING INDOORS

- High light or under artificial lights for best results
- Prefers cool temperatures free of drafts
- Water plant thoroughly, just as soil begins to dry
- Trim and use clippings to maintain decorative shape
- Keep trying until you find a location that works
- If the plant turns brown, move it to the back of your indoor garden. It still smells good when you give it a pet.

## **LEMON CYPRESS** (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa* 'Goldcrest', formerly *Cupressus macrocarpa*)

- **Some indication poisonous to cattle, nothing found on toxicity to pets**
- This plant needs 6-8 hours of sunlight and cool temperatures (60-65°) to thrive
- Water when the top 1 to 2 inches of soil dry, but do not let it dry completely
- Fertilize once a year in spring with any houseplant fertilizer
- Move outdoors for summer after the danger of frost has passed
  - Gardeners in Zone 7 and warmer can plant and grow it outdoors year round
    - Place in full sun or light shade in a location that's sheltered from cold, harsh winds

## **SPIKE MOSS** (*Selaginella kraussiana*)

- Needs special attention and care to keep it alive
- Grow in indirect light
- It thrives in normal room temperatures, but doesn't tolerate hot and cold extremes
- Evenly moist, but not soggy, wet soil and high humidity a must
  - Place on a gravel tray
  - Grow in terrarium
  - Set pot in Wardian Case
- Brown, crispy leaves means soil is too dry and/or humidity too low
- Brown leaf edges or bleached out spots means too much direct light

## **FORCED SPRING FLOWERING BULBS, AMARYLLIS AND PAPERWHITES**

Watch my FREE webinar *Brighten Dreary Winter Days by Forcing Some Bulbs into Bloom*

- [Webinar link](#)
- Access code: ?gAD\$!9y
- [Download handout](#)

And if you missed any past webinars, they are still available through December. Just visit my [Upcoming Appearances](#) page on my website for links and passwords to view the video and download the handout.

## **DRESS THEM UP OR TRY UNIQUE DISPLAYS, TERRARIUMS**

- No room for new plants? Or maybe you want something that will provide year round beauty. Add some glitz with ribbons and decorations or create colorful terrariums and dish gardens.

## **PLANT TOXICITY**

- Children - many University Extension Services and Children's Hospitals provide lists of toxic plants
- Pets - check with your veterinarian and [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for information on indoor and outdoor plants that are toxic and non-toxic to pets](#)

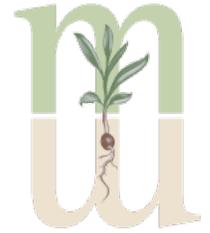


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