

## Proper Care for Gift Plants

Delight over a blooming plant given to you as a gift can turn to disappointment unless you can give it proper care. Seasonal blooming plants will last longest in your home if they are kept in a cool, bright location with sufficient room temperature water. Do not let the plant wilt & keep it away from cool drafts & artificial heat. If you would like to display it in a location, which is unsuitable as a long time home, return it to a suitable location when not being used as decoration.

**Poinsettias** are often given as gifts & they retain their colorful bracts for a long time if given the above care. After the bracts fall off you can hold the plant over to another season to bloom again. Put it in a cool location, near a basement window perhaps & water only occasionally. When warm weather comes, cut the stems back to no more than 8 inches & set it in a sunny spot in the garden. Bring indoors well before frost. The bracts will turn from green to red, pink, or white in response to a particular amount of darkness called photoperiodism beginning in October. This is achieved by keeping the plant in a room, which receives no artificial light from the time the sun sets until it rises in the morning.

**Cyclamens** need medium light & the soil to just begin to dry before giving them a soaking. Water at the edge avoiding pouring water into the crown of the plant. Cyclamens may have 6 – 8 blooms showing, but there are dozens of tiny buds in the heart of the plant. They will push their way up & bloom in a sunny window with plenty of water.

**Camellias** shine indoors in the winter with buds beginning to swell in December. They can be kept flowering if given temperatures below 50 degrees at night. During the day the sun can warm the plant, but when in a heated home the buds will drop if the plant receives a shot of hot air. Sun porches & unheated entryways are ideal spots. Camellias enjoy indirect light in a west-facing window. Water sparingly.

The **Holiday Cactus** needs bright indirect light & the soil should be allowed dry between watering. Maintain moderate humidity. These plants will bloom the next year if treated as Poinsettias with no artificial light.

Keeping gift plants healthy & happy can be a challenge, but seeing them bloom again is very rewarding.

Suzanne Tait, RIFGC Chairman of Horticulture & Gardens