

Euphorbia pulcherrima* Syn. *Poinsettia pulcherrima
Poinsettia / Red leaves / Christmas flower/ Nochebuena

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Poinsettia is a commercially important plant species of the diverse spurge family and is a native of Mexico. The name Poinsettia was given by Joel Roberts Poinsett, who introduced the plant to the U.S.A. It is an evergreen perennial landscape plant. It is a medium- large shrub grown for coloured red, orange, cream or yellow bracts. This plant serves as the most delightful decorations during Christmas and is widely used for decoration during Christmas and Easter seasons for floral displays. The dark red and green foliage of the plant serves as the major attraction. The species is a tall, rangy shrub that grows to a height of 10 ft. It has large, dark green, oval leaves that are "toothed" on the sides and pointed at the tips. They emerge from smooth green erect stems. Flowers are borne at the stem tips in winter. The actual flowers are quite small, green or yellow situated at the middle of the brilliantly colored bracts. The deep, vibrant red colorful parts of the poinsettia are the bracts, which are actually modified leaves. The colored bracts are most often flaming red but can be orange, pale green, cream, pink, white or marbled sometimes. Usually 8 to 10 bracts that are 4-7 inches long are found in this species. The star shaped leaves symbolizes the Star of Bethlehem and the dark red leaves signifies the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Inflorescence is cyathia which is terminal, on branched, stout peduncles, subtended by crimson to yellow bracts. The colors in Poinsettia come from photoperiodism. They require darkness for 12 hours at a time to change color. At the same time, the plants need a lot of light during the day for the brightest color.

Propagation

Poinsettias can be propagated by cuttings.

Cultivation and uses

Poinsettia is good for growing in sub-temperate to tropical areas. It is planted in flower pots and are placed in areas where sunlight is available in plenty. It can also be planted directly in the soil. Poinsettia leaves are widely used for Christmas, Easter, New Year and Valentine's Day decorations. Grown primarily as a pot plant, poinsettias are a big industry representing about 85% of potted plant Christmas season sales. This beautiful plant is generally kept indoor in living room or in terrace area and will brighten up any part of your home.