

Holiday Plant Care

Have you been given a holiday poinsettia and are now wondering about planting it outdoors in the landscape to have it re-bloom for you again next year? The best poinsettias to establish in the landscape are the red flower varieties that have been given good light while indoors having healthy green leaves. Choose a sunny well-drained, well watered spot that will not receive any artificial light at night. Lights from cars or landscape lights can interfere with a poinsettias ability to bloom at Christmas. Plant at the same depth it was growing in the container when there is no more danger of frost. Keep the plant mulched, well watered and fertilize with a liquid fertilizer each month from March to October. Prune every month leaving 4 leaves on each shoot to keep the plant bushy. Stop all pruning September 10. Flowers will begin developing in October for a beautiful holiday garden display.

Potted amaryllis is another great holiday gift you can plant into the garden after the flowers have faded and the leaves begin to turn yellow. Plant amaryllis bulbs in January with the neck of the bulb protruding above the ground. Choose an area of your garden that receives light shade such as under pine trees. Planted in heavy shade, the amaryllis will grow thin, spindly and flower poorly and if planted in full sun the foliage color will fade. Provided with good conditions and care, amaryllis plants will produce beautiful blooms year after year.

Christmas cactus is much more particular to care for. Place your cactus on a sunny windowsill or outside on the porch or patio where it can receive 2-4 hours of sunshine. Too much sun can burn its succulent leaves. Be careful to keep the soil moist, but not wet, fertilize with a liquid plant food lightly each month. Beginning in September stop fertilizing and reduce watering, this will force flower buds to open. Christmas cactus also need long nights to flower, so do not interrupt its long night with artificial lights or it will not flower.

For information on caring for your gift plants call the Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteers M-F 9-4 233-1750.





