

## Common Holiday Plants and Care

### **Poinsettia-Euphorbia pulcherrima**

Today's varieties of poinsettias are cultivated to last well through the holiday season, and require little care. Keep out of hot and cold drafts and be sure it is covered when transporting outdoors. If exposed to cold temperatures below 50 degrees F, poinsettias' leaves may become damaged, discolored, or drop. Once you are indoors, immediately remove your plant from its covering. Poinsettias release a gas that can be captured in its wrapping that will cause the plant to age and drop foliage. In your home, keep your poinsettias in bright, indirect sunlight in temperatures around 60-70 degrees F. It is very important that you do not over water your plant. Poinsettias like evenly moist to slightly dry soil. We recommend removing the pretty foil pot cover from your plant to avoid water log. For more information on poinsettia care and keeping a poinsettia year round, see Petitti Garden Centers "Poinsettia Pointers" and "Poinsettia Care After the Holidays" flyers.

### **Christmas Cactus-Schlumbergera spp.**

At home, place your cacti near a sunny window, receiving 6 hours or less of direct sun to bright, indirect light. Too much light and heat can cause foliage to turn red, flower drop, and wilting. Grow in normal household temperatures until after the last spring frost when you can place it outdoors in a shady garden spot. In the winter, water your plant when the soil is dry an inch below the surface. In the summer, you may need to increase watering so the soil is evenly moist to slightly dry. Fertilize your cacti spring through late summer, but stop feeding them when they start to bud in fall. In October, encourage your plant to re-bloom by exposing it to 2-3 weeks of cooler night temperatures between 40-60 degrees F. Bring it under cover during frosts. The shortening of the day length and 2-3 weeks of cooling will trigger new bud development. After the cooling, bring the plant back inside to normal indoor temperatures and bright light. It should bloom again in a few weeks. Propagate by removing a couple of leaf sections per stem after flowering, and root in moist potting soil or perlite.

### **Ivy, Rosemary, and Boxwood Topiaries**

During the holiday season, you will often find several different types of topiaries for gift giving and holiday decoration. Many topiaries are made by pruning or training woody plants around frames in shapes of wreaths and hearts. These woody plants prefer cooler, indoor temperatures ranging from 45-65 degrees F. Soil moisture should be slightly dry to avoid over watering. Be sure to provide as much direct sunlight as possible to bright indirect light. These plants would prefer a southern, western or eastern window. Keep them away from hot drafts. To maintain their shape, your topiary will require regular pruning. Prune every few weeks when it is actively growing to keep the plant compact and full. You can grow most topiaries outdoors in summer if you like.

### **Amaryllis-Hippeastrum spp.**

An amaryllis that is purchased during the holidays is either starting to bud or ready to be planted in order to start blooming. Plant your new amaryllis in a pot 1-2" larger than the bulb, and use sterile potting soil covering the roots up to the bottom half of the bulb. Moisten the soil thoroughly letting the excess water drain out and then discard. Potted amaryllis should be kept in bright, indirect light, no direct sun, also rotating the pot to keep the flowering stalk growing evenly. Re-apply water when the soil surface becomes dry to the touch. Staying on the drier side will keep the bulb from rotting. No fertilizer is needed while they are producing blooms. (continued on back)

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## **Amaryllis continued**

Amaryllis kept in cooler household temperatures (55-65 degrees F) will bloom the longest, and may last for 7-10 weeks. As the flowers fade, cut the stalk off just above the bulb neck and leave the foliage. Maintain the amaryllis foliage year round indoors or place it outdoors in a shady spot during the summer. Remember to water regularly and fertilize with Bulb-tone or a blooming plant food spring, summer, and fall. In September, keep the potted plant in cool conditions indoors (55 degrees F), still maintaining light levels, water, etc. for eight weeks. After this cooling period, you should see flowering within the holidays. If you forget to cool the plant, it will naturally flower in late winter/early spring. The key is to keep the foliage green and healthy all year, removing yellow leaves as needed.

## **Cyclamen-Cyclamen persicum**

Cyclamen is a festive, holiday plant that prefers the cooler temperatures of the holiday season. This plant can grow in a cooler area around 50-65 degrees F. Place on a cool northern or eastern window where it can receive bright, indirect light, but not heat. When watering, keep the plant's soil on the dry side. The plant will wilt slightly when it's ready, but will perk back up after the soil is moistened. Bottom watering is recommended so the cyclamen roots absorb the water they need, but do not let your cyclamen sit in water for any extended amount of time. Fertilize with half strength, blooming plant food once a month. Deadhead spent flowers by gently pulling the stalk from the bulb instead of cutting. Cyclamen can stay in bloom for several months with the proper care. Please see our "Primrose and Cyclamen" flyer for additional information on outdoor uses and re-blooming tips.

## **Moth Orchid-Phalaenopsis spp.**

This orchid is considered to be one of the easiest orchids to grow, especially during the winter months indoors with their main flowering season lasting several months, winter into spring. Nights of 60-65 degrees F with day temperatures ranging from 70-80 degrees F are best. Phalaenopsis orchids prefer bright, indirect light where foliage color should maintain a medium green appearance. Limp, dark green leaves indicate low light conditions. Water in the morning thoroughly so the growing medium is evenly moist to slightly dry, and never soaking. Preferring high humidity, place the orchid on a humidity tray of moistened pebbles or spray mist once a day. Fertilize with an orchid food; follow the package instructions. After flowering is finished, trim the flower spike to just above where the first flower opened; this will encourage branching and more flowering. Re-pot once a year to every other year in late spring after flowering.

## **Norfolk Pine-Araucaria heterophylla**

This tropical, evergreen houseplant makes a great miniature, decorated tree for homes, offices, and spaces that do not have room for a larger Christmas tree. Grow in bright, indirect light keeping the soil evenly moist with consistent re-watering and high humidity. The higher humidity will result in soft needles and better needle retention. They prefer cooler temperatures around 55-65 degrees F. Keep out of hot or cold drafts. Fertilize with a tropical houseplant food once a month April through October. Dry, yellowing needles on the trunk are a result of low humidity and dry soil conditions. Norfolk pine do not appreciate pruning unless to remove any dried tips or branches. Turn your plant regularly to produce a symmetrical growth habit.