

## Holiday Plant Care

I can't believe it is almost Thanksgiving again, which means the holiday season is upon us. With the onset of the holidays comes the holiday décor, including holiday plants. There are many plants that we associate with Christmas, Hanukah, and the other winter holidays. We need to be careful when transporting them home and take good care of them when they get home.

When we purchase holiday plants, the care of them begins in the store you purchase them in. The first thing you need to do for the best health of those plants is to ensure that they are covered up with plastic as you bring them out to your car from the store and from your car to your home. Exposure to cold temperatures and wind, that is inevitable in Nebraska, can damage the leaves, the flowers or the bracts, which are the leaf-like, colored parts of plants such as poinsettias. When you get them home, you should take the plastic off of the plant and be sure to keep the plant watered. You also need to make sure that your plant is in a pot with drainage holes and remove the decorative wrapping from the pot when you get it home to allow for more drainage.

Many of our holiday plants are beautiful to enjoy, but we need to be careful with them around children and pets, because there are quite a few holiday plants that are poisonous if ingested. The berries of holly and mistletoe are poisonous if eaten by children or pets. Christmas cactus, poinsettia, and amaryllis are three plants that are typically grown as houseplants for blooming in the holiday season. Christmas cactus and amaryllis are poisonous if eaten. Poinsettias are not poisonous to eat, however, they have a milky sap that can cause skin irritation if it gets on you.

Not all of your decorations for the holidays needs to be living plants or fake greenery, you can use real greenery from your own landscape. Fresh greenery not only adds a great decorating touch to your home for the holidays, but it also will add a nice holiday scent to your home. Cedars, white pine, juniper, spruce, ivy and holly are all great choices of live greenery for your home this holiday season. You can take these directly from your landscape, just be careful when you prune these decorations off of your living plants. Don't make all of cuts in the same location and try to make them far enough back in the plant that the other branches cover the cuts. Use a hand pruner to make good cuts that will not harm your tree or shrub.

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