



University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service

### Cooperative Extension Service

Clark County  
1400 Fortune Drive  
Winchester KY 40391-8292  
(859) 744-4682  
Fax: (859) 744-4698  
Email: [clark.ext@uky.edu](mailto:clark.ext@uky.edu)

**DECEMBER 2022**



## HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

### *From the Ground Up*

#### Inside this issue:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Word from the Agent .....               | pg. 1 |
| Holiday Closing .....                   | pg. 1 |
| Winter School Dates .....               | pg. 1 |
| Clark Powell Beekeepers Meeting .....   | pg. 1 |
| Keeping Your Poinsettia Alive.....      | pg. 2 |
| Buggy Gifts in the Christmas Tree ..... | pg. 3 |
| Bring Your Garden Inside .....          | pg. 4 |
| DIY Gift Ideas for Gardeners .....      | pg. 5 |
| Quick Tips for December .....           | pg. 5 |
| Recipe: .....                           | pg. 6 |
| <i>"Fiesta Potatoes"</i>                |       |

### *A Word from the Agent...*



Happy December my friends!! We had a bit of a cold snap in November, but the temperatures finally leveled back off and I was thankful for that. If you haven't, now is the time to wrap up any winterizing outside that still needs to be done. Water hoses, stray garden tools, and the last of the tomato cages all can be gathered up and put away. Yes, I may have just named off the things I still have to take care of personally. The winter

scenery is always much more enjoyable when you're not having to stare at the tasks you should have done. As we move into the busy month of December, please be sure to take care of yourself. And as always, be sure to reach out with any of your horticulture needs!! We'll see you around town!

**Carrie Spry**

Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture

[carrie.spry@uky.edu](mailto:carrie.spry@uky.edu)

Follow us on  
**Instagram**  
[clarkextensionhort](https://www.instagram.com/clarkextensionhort)

Find us on  
**Facebook**



### Holiday Hours

The Clark County Extension Service will CLOSE for the holidays on December 24, 2022 and will reopen January 3, 2023.



**Clark/Powell Beekeepers Association will NOT meet in December. The next meeting will be Monday, January 9, 6:30 pm at the Clark County Extension Service.**



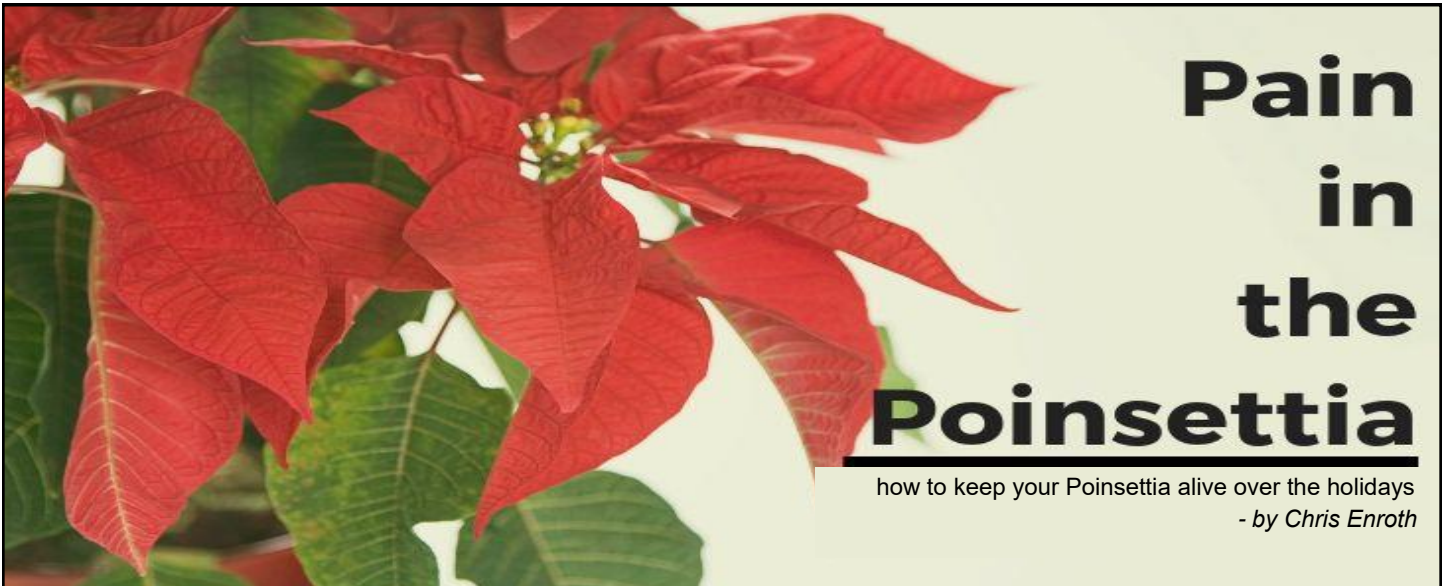
## 2022 Winter School

Our annual Winter School will be held in February next year. The dates are February 16, 21, and 25. So mark your calendar now, so you won't miss out. *Details coming in upcoming newsletters.*

Cooperative Extension Service  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.  
LEXINGTON, KY 40546

Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.



# Pain in the Poinsettia

how to keep your Poinsettia alive over the holidays

- by Chris Enroth

All of your friends know you are an avid gardener. With all the vegetables you give away each summer, you hold the status of Gardening Guru. You have likely responded to plant emergency calls, and resuscitated an ailing house or garden plant.

It seems only logical for a gardener's friend to assume the perfect holiday gift to get the Gardening Guru is a Poinsettia. Now you, the gardener, have the attention of everyone as you do your best to keep a houseplant alive in the middle of winter. Why is that so hard? Mainly because that plant is being taken from the perfect growing environment, a greenhouse with state of the art climate controls and cultural care, to a less than ideal home in the middle of winter.

Garden Guru or not, there are ways to keep that Poinsettia alive during the holiday season. And to do that, we need to know a bit about where the plant comes from and its history.

## Why Poinsettia?

With known cultivation going back to the Aztec civilization, Poinsettias are native to Southern Mexico. In 1825, President John Quincy Adams appointed the first US Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, a politician with an interest in botany. Wandering the countryside of Mexico, Poinsett took cuttings from a large beautiful shrub with red flowers growing next to the road. He sent these to his greenhouse in South Carolina, thereby introducing the Poinsettia to the United States. As the plant became more popular in the US, it garnered the official name of Poinsettia in honor of Joel Poinsett.

Today Poinsettias are the most popular retail potted plants in the US with over 34 million sold each year. Most Poinsettias are purchased in the six weeks leading up to Christmas.

In its native range in Southern Mexico, Poinsettia blooms during December, where the plant was traditionally used to decorate churches to celebrate Christmas. By manipulating a Poinsettias exposure to light, greenhouse growers were able to simulate southern Mexico conditions to trigger flowering and create a popular off-season nursery product for the holidays.

## Tips for Poinsettia Care for the Holidays

- ✿ Make sure it is wrapped properly because exposure to low temperatures even for a few minutes can damage the bracts and leaves. Remember these are tropical plants!
- ✿ Place the Poinsettia in indirect light. Keep the plant from touching cold windows.
- ✿ Keep Poinsettias away from warm or cold drafts from radiators, air registers or open doors and windows.
- ✿ Ideally, Poinsettias require daytime temperatures of 60 to 70°F and nighttime temperatures around 55°F. High temperatures will shorten the plant's life. Move the plant to a cooler room at night, if possible.
- ✿ Check the soil daily. Be sure to punch holes in the decorative foil so water can drain into a saucer. Water when the soil is dry. Allow water to drain into the saucer and discard excess water.

These tips will keep your Poinsettia alive through the holidays or at least until the relatives leave. Check back with the Good Growing column next week for Ken Johnson's advice on keeping your Poinsettia alive for months or years and how to get the plant to rebloom.



# Buggy Gifts Inside the Christmas Tree

- By Jonathan Larson; Extension Entomologist

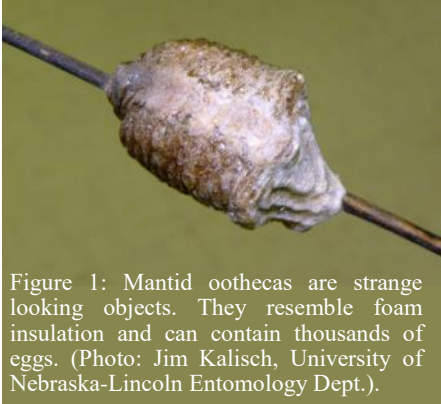


Figure 1: Mantid oothecas are strange looking objects. They resemble foam insulation and can contain thousands of eggs. (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Dept.).

If your household celebrates Christmas and prefers to do it with a natural tree, you may end up bringing in more than just a beautiful evergreen. There are several kinds of insects and arachnids that may be hiding on the needles and twigs of your delightful décor.

Some of the invaders with Yuletide spirit include pine adelgids, aphids, scale insects, and spiders. One of the more interesting insects that may crash your Christmas gathering is a praying mantis. These hitchhikers usually enter the home as eggs, which is the normal overwintering state for many arthropods. Mantids specifically, create an ootheca, an egg case that looks like spray foam insulation and protect their eggs. These can be on the trunk or twigs of a tree and hard to spot.

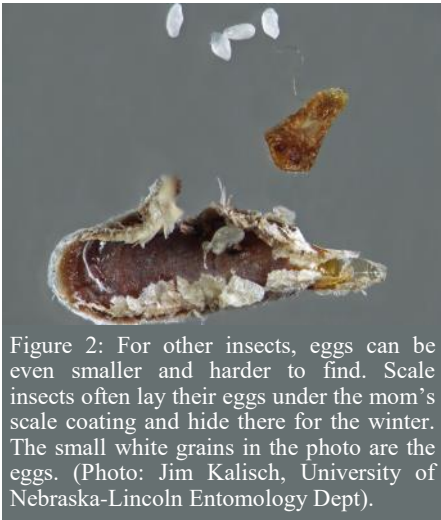


Figure 2: For other insects, eggs can be even smaller and harder to find. Scale insects often lay their eggs under the mom's scale coating and hide there for the winter. The small white grains in the photo are the eggs. (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Dept.).

Regardless of species, eggs gradually develop as the winter thaws into spring. This is through the accumulation of degree days: certain days in which the temperature reaches a threshold that allows for development. Indoors, however, they will accrue degree days much faster and eggs can hatch during the Christmas season, possibly leading to hundreds, even thousands, of tiny critters running around your gifts. None of the mentioned arthropods pose a hazard to homes, pets, people, or stocking stuffers though. You can always easily vacuum them up and dispose of them.

You may also find some adult insects and spiders that are hiding in the tree. Stink bugs are one possible example that could be using the tree as their winter home. Bark beetles are another possibility and would emerge as adults from the wood of the tree. The larvae of these small beetles (1/4 inch or less long as adults) live and feed in wood. Usually they overwinter in the trunk and emerge as adults the

## Management

All in all, these accidental house guests may be alarming but shouldn't cause much concern. Vacuuming, spritzing individuals with soapy water, or sweeping them outside are all acceptable responses. Bug bombs, liquid sprays, or other insecticides should not be used on the tree. These residues could be hazardous to people and are not likely to control any of the mentioned bugs.

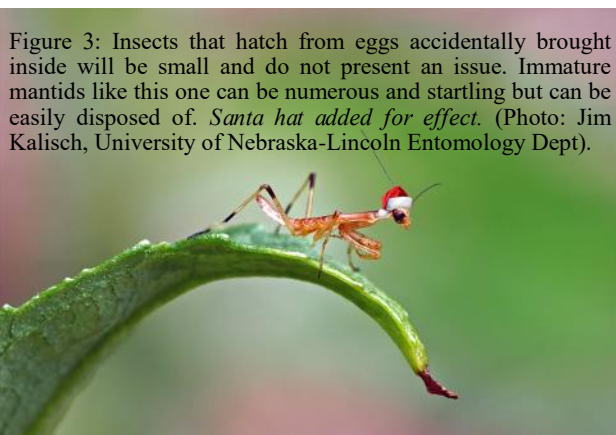


Figure 3: Insects that hatch from eggs accidentally brought inside will be small and do not present an issue. Immature mantids like this one can be numerous and startling but can be easily disposed of. *Santa hat added for effect.* (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Dept.).



Figure 4: Bark beetles may be around a quarter of an inch long and will emerge from the bark of decorative trees. They will not use wood found in your home for food or egg laying. (Photo: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Entomology Department).

# BRING YOUR GARDEN INSIDE

By Carrie Spry, Clark County Extension Agent for Horticulture

If you are like me, you are secretly enjoying the break from the vegetable garden. But if the thought of facing a long winter without straight-from-the-garden freshness makes you sad, weep no more. It's easy as pumpkin pie to grow your own produce indoors.

There are a number of indoor gardening systems on the market today. They range in price and require anything from 2 square feet in space all the way to a multi-tiered 5-foot wide rack of shelving and grow lights. But if you don't have the money or space to invest in one of these systems, don't worry. There's plenty you can do without them.

The biggest challenge people usually face when growing plants indoors is light. Some plants, like tomatoes, which can be grown in a pot indoors, require close to 10 hours of light a day. You might not be able to get that much light relying on windows alone. However, if you have a table or deep windowsill, you can position a grow light over your plants. Grow lights are bright, wide-spectrum lights that approximate sunlight. They come in all price ranges and styles, from desktop to hanging versions. You can also use a full-spectrum fluorescent light if you have a fixture nearby. There are also LED plant lights that are a bit more expensive but use less electricity than fluorescent lights. Incandescent bulbs do not emit the right spectrum of light for plant growth, so avoid those.

Containers should have proper drainage. Greens and some herbs only need a few inches of depth, while tomatoes will require a 12-inch deep pot. Use potting soil, which has better drainage, rather than garden soil.



## **Here are some easy plants to consider growing indoors this winter:**

- **Scallions and garlic greens.** For scallions, also known as green onions, you can cut off the tip with the roots and place it in a glass with about an inch of water. When the roots are 2 or 3 inches long, plant them in potting soil in a shallow container. You can either harvest the green tops and let the plant continue to grow or use the entire green onion. For garlic greens, plant a garlic clove in a few inches of potting soil mix. You won't be able to grow bulbs, but the green portion tastes garlicky and serves as a good substitute, either raw or sauteed.
- **Carrots.** Small carrots are easy to grow in potting soil. Sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil in a pot or long window box, lightly cover with damp peat moss and water well. And don't throw away those carrot tops. They're edible and nutritious and can be used in soups and sauces and even smoothies.
- **Salad greens.** Spread the seeds across the top of a 2-inch to 4-inch deep container filled with potting soil. Lightly press them into the soil and mist to keep the seeds moist. Wait until the leaves are at least 4 inches long and then harvest the leaves starting from the outside of the plant. These plants will keep producing all season long, if you harvest them leaf by leaf.
- **Herbs:** Basil, chives and parsley are extremely easy to grow indoors. Parsley demands more humidity, so misting the plants will help them flourish. Use an organic fertilizer to help your herbs reach their full potential.



# Looking for some **DIY Gifts** for the gardener? . . . Check out some of these ideas for a DIY gift!



**Rock Plant Labels**



**Crocheted Garden Gnome**



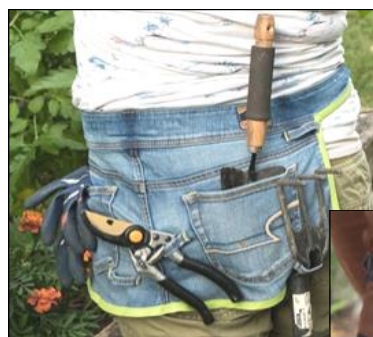
**Mini Tabletop Zen Garden**



**Gardener Care Kit**



**Water Hose Wreath**



**Jean Garden Apron**



- 1 Make sure your evergreens are well watered going into the winter months.
- 2 Outdoor pond inhabitants may encounter problems if the pond freezes over and gases cannot escape. A basketball floated on the surface will often keep a small spot from freezing.
- 3 If you haven't already, empty and store flower pots for the season. Many pots, particularly clay and ceramic, will be damaged by moisture and freezing temperatures.
- 4 It seems early, but start planning gardens and place seed orders soon. Many popular items and new offerings will sell out early.
- 5 Use fallen leaves to mulch your vegetable garden. These can be tilled in next spring to add valuable organic matter. They will also protect the soil by preventing erosion, compaction, and to a degree, inhibit cool season weeds from germinating.
- 6 Water is often as limited a resource for birds as food. If you enjoy feeding and watching birds try a bird bath de-icer or electric pet bowl. See if you don't attract more feathered friends than before.
- 7 If you will be establishing a new lawn this spring, **Do A Soil Test Now!** New ground usually benefits from an application of nitrogen, and sometimes phosphorus, potassium or lime (ONLY if pH is too low).
- 8 Be careful where you throw de-icing salt, as well as the contaminated slush, snow and ice which you scoop off the walks. Most plants are easily damaged by these salts. Try using sand, sawdust, urea fertilizer or kitty litter for traction rather than the de-icing salts, or buy a brand which is labeled "**safe for plants**".
- 9 Avoid walking on frozen turf as much as possible. Whenever you hear the crunch of icy grass, you are actually damaging the crown (growing point) of the frozen grass plant.
- 10 Your landscape can be a great source of materials for holiday decorating. Light pruning will generally not harm your plants in the winter and you may be surprised at the variety in your own yard. Don't just consider evergreens, but use ornamental grasses, pine cones, fruits, berries, even mosses in your decorating.

**RECIPE**

what's cooking



**Fiesta Potatoes**

- |   |                                      |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 8 small to medium russet potatoes, peeled and diced | 1 medium onion, chopped              | parsley, chopped                         |
| 1 green bell pepper, chopped                        | 1 cup Mexican blend cheese, shredded | 1 <b>tablespoon</b> dried basil, crushed |
| 1 red bell pepper, chopped                          | ½ <b>cup</b> margarine, melted       | ¾ <b>teaspoon</b> salt                   |
|   | ½ <b>cup</b> low-fat milk            | ¼ <b>teaspoon</b> black pepper           |
|   | 2 <b>tablespoons</b> fresh           |  |

**Preheat** oven to 350 degrees F. **Place** the potatoes, bell peppers and onion in a medium pan and cover with water. **Place** over high heat and bring to a **boil**. **Reduce** heat and **simmer** 12-15 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. **Drain** the vegetables and **place** in a mixing bowl. **Stir** in the cheese, margarine, milk and seasonings until combined. **Spread** the mixture in a

9-by-13-inch baking pan that has been sprayed with a non-stick coating. **Bake** for about 20 minutes or until bubbly.

**Yield:** 12, ½ cup servings

**Nutritional Analysis:** 200 calories, 9 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 370 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 3 g sugar, 9 g protein.



Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.  
<http://plateitup.ca.uky.edu>