

# HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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## HOLIDAY PLANTS AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

As the end of another year is upon us we once again get to reminisce about a year past and dream about a year yet future. We are also wrapping up the holiday season which means many folks are wondering what they can do with their Christmas trees and holiday plants like poinsettias.

### Christmas Trees

There may be more options than you might think for that old Christmas tree. Of course some municipalities and trash collectors will take an expired Christmas tree off your hands, but in some cases this may not be an option.

One less used, but effective tactic for disposing of the Christmas tree for those who have a pond on the property is that of sinking it in a pond (assuming it isn't frozen of course.) It may sound funny, but trees like this can serve as a little coral reef that provides area for water plants to grow and can also provide cover for minnows and other forms of life. You will need to tie a good sized rock to the tree before tossing it in to assure it sinks.

Another more common method of disposal is to actually use the tree around the landscape. By simply clipping off the branches and using the boughs as insulation or mulch around other shrubs and trees you can eliminate much of the waste.

Of course you can always use the tree for firewood as well, but be careful since conifer species tend to spark and pop a little in the fire.

### Poinsettias

Poinsettia plants are a staple of the holidays, and many people want to know if these plants can be kept and made to bloom the following year.

The truth is that a poinsettia can be saved for next year's holiday season, but there is a little catch. Poinsettias are difficult to re-bloom which means it will take patience and plenty of effort if you pursue this route.

To re-bloom a poinsettia looks something like this:

- Late March: cut the poinsettia back to 4-8" above the soil, water regularly and fertilize every two weeks
- Poinsettias may be placed outside when night temperatures are over 55 degrees. Do NOT plant it in the ground
- Prune the plant in June and July to keep it bushy and compact, stop trimming in September
- Starting October 1 place the plant in TOTAL darkness for 14 hours each night, and in bright sunshine during the day- this will start the blooming process.
- In early to mid December you should see color on the leaves in time for the holidays.

As you can see, it will take some dedication to keep a poinsettia year round and get it to bloom again. This is why many people choose to simply enjoy the plant for the holiday season and then throw it out in favor of purchasing another the following year. If you do throw it out, the compost pile makes a great place to recycle it.