

Red prestige (PRETTY IN PINK, CREAM AND PURPLE, TOO)

GROWN IN A RICH array of hues, poinsettias lend elegance and warmth to winter décor, while their colorful star-shaped bracts — according to a 16th-century legend — symbolize the Star of Bethlehem.

Robert Poinsett, the first U.S. Minister to Mexico, brought poinsettias to America

in the early 1800s. Over time, these non-poisonous plants found their way to Michigan, where they've become a prolific part of the season: Each year, more than 2.3 million poinsettias are grown in greenhouses around the state, ranking Michigan seventh for production nationwide.

Masterpiece Flower Company in Byron



Township (above) is one of Michigan's largest 54 poinsettia growers, overseeing approximately 25 varieties and an annual crop of about 550,000. As the exclusive supplier for Meijer, they're pushing the limits when it comes to size, color and bling.

"There are novelty colors such as Ice Punch, Ice Crystals and Monet and, new for us this year, Early Twilight," says Ron Mercer, a company partner. He notes trendy European painted poinsettias also make a splash in colors such as purple and blue.

Still, well-rooted to tradition, "Prestige Red" ranks among the best-selling hybrids.

To find poinsettia growers and retailers near you, visit realmichiganchristmas.com/grower.php. — Tai Alexander



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DID YOU KNOW?

The showy colored parts of poinsettias that most people think of as the flowers are actually colored bracts (modified leaves). The yellow flowers, or cyathia, are in the center of these bracts. The plant drops its bracts and leaves soon after those flowers shed their pollen. For the longest-lasting poinsettia, choose plants with little or no yellow showing.

In nature, poinsettias are perennial flowering shrubs. They will grow outdoors in temperate coastal climates, such as Southern California. In the ground, they can reach 10 feet tall.

— "THE POINSETTIA PAGES," UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

POINSETTIA POINTERS

1 Be sure to remove foil covering drain holes before watering. When plant feels light and soil is dry, water in the sink, allow to drain and water again. Do not let the poinsettia wilt. Do not let it sit with water in the saucer. Empty the saucer.

2 Place the poinsettia in indirect light. Six hours of light daily is ideal.

3 Keep poinsettias away from warm or cold drafts from radiators, window panes, air registers or open doors and windows. Ideal indoor temperatures range from 60° to 70°F.

4 Placing your poinsettia in a cool room 55° to 60°F at night will extend blooming time. Do not fertilize when plant is in bloom.

5 Poinsettias can be kept year-round. Apply a houseplant fertilizer once a month. To get a poinsettia to reflower, keep it in total darkness between 5-8 p.m. beginning Oct. 1 and continue until color shows on the bracts (typically around early to mid-December).

6 Poinsettias can be placed outdoors when the danger of frost has passed. Choose a sunny spot, but where the plant will get moderate shade in the afternoon.
— REALMICHIGANCHRISTMAS.COM



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