

# Poinsettia finishing tips

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**T**he crop by now should be sold but not delivered. There are several cultural details that should not be forgotten or neglected at this late date. These details can add significantly to the quality of the poinsettia crop and ensure better customer satisfaction.

**Detail check list:**

**1. Light**—Poinsettias require high light. Remove all shade from greenhouses. Do not grow hangers over the "point" crop which will produce detrimental shade. Space plants adequately as the crop increases in size. Spacing also enables the growth regulator to be fully effective. Poor or low light conditions have been determined to cause premature flower bud drop (center drop).

**2. Nutrition and/or Fertilization**—During the crop production cycle of the poinsettia, fertility levels must be maintained in the high range to optimize plant growth. Research has shown that the percentage of nitrate-nitrogen should be increased to at least 50% or more than ammonium-nitrogen during the last month or so of production. This shift of nitrogen source will reduce the occurrence of bract necrosis and subsequent botrytis invasion. At this time the concentration of total fertilizers should be reduced to "tone-up" the crop and avoid root injury caused by high soluble salts in the customer's home.

**3. Temperature**— "Point" growers know the importance of proper temperature during flower initiation and bract development. Once the ultimate bract size and development have occurred, temperatures should be gradually lowered from mid-November to early December, depending on your marketing date. Cooler finishing temperatures will intensify bract color and cyathia retention. Remember, temperature and light influence bract size and rate of development.

**4. Humidity Management**—Excessively high humidity in the greenhouse environment after bract coloration is a needless disease risk (Botrytis). Simultaneously, heat and vent greenhouse to reduce night greenhouse humidity and the Botrytis disease potential. At night, turn horizontal air flow fans on.

**5. Insect Control**—No insect pests should be present on your crop after "bract color." If some whitefly appear, clean them up immediately. Use extreme caution and follow product label directions for approved materials exactly.

**Editors comment—Over the years this author has seen sulfatepp (Dithio, Plant Fume 103, Dithione) used successfully after bract coloration with no phytotoxic injury. Growers must follow temperature and humidity directions exactly.**

## **References**

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