

Poinsettia Propagation Pointers

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Two key words which must be not only noted, but also practiced, for successful poinsettia propagation are: *sanitation* and *temperature* (specifically bottom-heat).

Disinfected potting benches, tools, mist lines, hose ends and bench surfaces are essential for disease-free cutting production. The propagation media, flats and/or containers must be new or disinfected if used previously. A good disinfectant can be made by diluting Chlorox or household bleach (1 part to 9 parts water). Caution: keep greenhouse vents open or fans on to remove or dilute the chlorine gas evolved; it can injure plant tissue. Other commercial surface disinfectants for greenhouse use are also on the market.

Remove all weeds and debris from the greenhouse. These serve as a reservoir for insect and/or disease build-up. Good housekeeping practices will significantly reduce insect and disease problems. Sanitation must be the by-word in any propagation house.

Some growers prepare a slurry mixture of 1 1/2 lbs. of hydrated lime and 1 lb. of copper sulfate per gallon of water and apply it under benches to control fungus gnat larvae.

The next most important factor in the propagation of poinsettias is medium temperature. Minimum medium temperature is 70°F, but 70-75°F is preferred. Use soil thermometers. Insert several soil thermometers into the propagating medium to make sure that no "cold spots" exist in the bottom-heat system. Reminder: the longer it takes to root a cutting, the greater the chances that disease or other problems will occur. Get poinsettia cuttings out of the propagating bench as soon as possible. Editorial note: never turn off the heating system when growing poinsettias. Over the years I have seen many growers lose large numbers of late propagated cuttings mainly because of low media temperatures.

References

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