

# Poinsettia Stock Plant Management

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**B**y the time most of you receive this newsletter, your poinsettia cuttings will be planted and well established.

Once the poinsettia stock plant is established (rooted into the surrounding medium), "push" the crop. The poinsettia originated in a warm climate. Optimum conditions required for maximum stock plant growth include full light, adequate moisture, correct temperatures and medium to high fertility levels.

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Do not shade stock plants and provide ample space between them. Poinsettias require high light. Give them plenty of space now (to maximize cutting production) and after panning.

Maintain uniform moisture levels in the medium. Do not allow stock plant media to "dry" and thus subject the plants to needless stress. Also, keep the relative humidity adequate (i.e. 70-80% RH) to stimulate rapid, strong cutting breaks.

Although poinsettia stock plants are grown during the normally warm summer and early fall months, maintain night temperatures of at least 64-66°F and day temperatures of 75-80°F. Lower temperatures reduce stock plant growth and cutting production. Remember: Never turn off the heating system when growing poinsettias (stock plants, propagation or panning). One never knows when we will have a cool "snap" in New England.

Poinsettias are heavy feeders. *Don't Guess—Soil Test.* Once the stock plant is established, maintain all the nutrient levels in the

medium at a high range. Recent research has determined that poinsettias respond to additional applications of magnesium and molybdenum. (Follow label rates for molybdenum and soil test for magnesium).

An additional cultural concern with poinsettia cutting production is stem splitting. The cultural recommendations to reduce or avoid splitting are:

1. Cuttings propagated before August 1 should be grown as a pinched crop.
2. Pinch stock plants regularly until propagation time.
3. Discard cuttings shaded by plant shoots or leaves.
4. Use photoperiodic night light until September 15 to keep stock plant shoots vegetative.

#### References

Freeman, R. N. 1987. *Poinsettia splitting*. Long Island Horticulture News. Aug.:3.

Hartley, D. E. 1986. *Poinsettia pointers from the Paul Ecke ranch*. BPI News. Vol. XVII, No. 7:4-5.

Tayama, H. K. et al. 1988. *Tips on growing poinsettias*. Ohio Cooperative Extension Service Bulletin FP - 764:1-5.

Tjia, B. O. et al. 1982. *Commercial poinsettia production in Florida*. Florida Cooperative Extension, IFAS, SP 27:1-60.

## Note of Interest

The 1991 UConn Horticulture Show will be held during Parent's Weekend on Saturday, September 21 from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, September 22 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at The University of Connecticut Ratcliffe Hicks Arena. The theme for this year's show is: *Scenes of New England*.