

Remember that in every instance, the pots should be placed on the mats and watered thoroughly to establish capillarity between the mat and the medium in the pot.

It has been found that lighter root media give better results on capillary mats. Good aeration is essential. At the same time, a bit of soil (10-15%) added to a peat-lite or bark mix will improve water relations and consumer satisfaction. With your New England water, this method of irrigation should be used more widely.

Poinsettias

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By the time you receive this newsletter the poinsettia stock plants will be pinched several times and well established. Those who purchase 2 1/4's in August or September will be ordering containers, media components, Cycocel (if you use it), insecticides, fungicides, and mentally or physically making room for the crop.

Poinsettias have specific cultural requirements that must be met to insure optimum growth and development of a profitable crop. These requirements have been stressed in the cultural manuals, trade papers, and university publications (see references). Since the greenhouse business is one of time pressures, reviews should be helpful to the harried grower.

Some of the essential cultural requirements for poinsettia production include:

1. Prepare a loose, disinfested, well drained medium, Test before using - mineral soil pH adjusted to 6.0-6.5 and soilless mixes pH, 5.5-6.5. Adequate levels of calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus must be incorporated prior to planting.

2. Provide full sunlight—poinsettias are high light requiring plants. Do not grow in heavily shaded or low light structures. Excessively long internodes and reduced

breaks will occur. Extra space will be needed to produce an acceptable crop.

3. Maintain honest, uniform temperatures. Do not locate the thermostat or thermometer 2-5' above crop height. Place thermometer in the crop or at crop height. If thermostats are fixed, make appropriate setting adjustments based on thermometers placed at crop level. [Editors comment: Too often we see thermostats at eye level, but crops are grown on the greenhouse floor or on slightly raised pallets or benches.]

4. Fertilize regularly and at rather high rates. Poinsettias are heavy "feeders". Large bracts, dark foliage, and strong branches will not be produced from starved plants. Take several soil samples during the production of this crop and apply enough fertilizer.

5. Apply Banrot, Truban, Lesan, Terraclor and/or Benlate as fungicidal soil drenches to eliminate or reduce losses caused by root rot organisms. Follow all label directions and precautions.

6. Prevent whitefly build-up by using Temik, dithio, resmethrin, or Vapona at label recommendations. Remove all weeds from walks and under greenhouse benches. Keep the weed or lawn area outside the greenhouse mowed.

7. Spray Cycocel (1:80 dilution) or A-rest (1:3 dilution) at suggested times for growth control. Spraying Cycocel up to 5 to 8 times during the growing season is being practiced by Canadian growers and researchers. They are making the first application shortly after breaks are 1/2 inch long rather than the 1 to 2 inch length suggested in this area. Perhaps you may want to treat a few pots if your plants are normally too tall.

References

- Bing, A., et al. 1982. *Cornell Poinsettia Guidelines for 1982*. Reprinted by: Cooperative Extension - Suffolk County. p. 1-8.
- Kothes, J. S., J. J. Maisano, Jr., C. Salsedo, and R. Adams. 1980. *Producing Poinsettias Commercially*. NE-235 p. 1-24. (available from your CT Extension Agent).
- Tayama, H. K. 1982. *Quality Poinsettias - Fundamentals - 1982*. Ohio Florists Assoc. Bul. No. 633:1-3.
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