

POINSETTIA CUT FLOWERS*

Peter B. Pfahl

The Pennsylvania State University

A preliminary study was set up to determine the best treatment to make cut poinsettias last longer. The poinsettias were cut from plants in the University Floricultural greenhouses.

Three cut poinsettias 15 to 18 inches in length were used in each of 10 different treatments. Half of the treatments used flowers with all leaves on the stem, and half used flowers with every leaf removed. The treatments were as follows:

* Condensed from Pennsylvania Flower Growers 94, November 1958, p. 12.

1. Check--stems in regular tap water with all leaves attached.
2. Regular tap water with all leaves removed.
3. Warm water (75-90° F) with all leaves attached.
4. Warm water (75-90° F) with all leaves removed.
5. Stem end singed with a flame and all leaves attached.
6. Stem end singed with a flame and all leaves removed.
7. Stems placed in boiling water for 30 seconds with all leaves attached.
8. Stem placed in boiling water for 30 seconds with all leaves removed.
9. Warm water (90° F) placed in a 35° F refrigerator overnight with all leaves attached.
10. Warm water (90° F) placed in a 35° F refrigerator overnight with all leaves removed.

The flower stems were placed immediately after cutting in mason jars of water. They were all held at room temperature throughout the experiment except treatments 9 and 10 which were in a refrigerator for 18 hours.

The results of the experiment are shown in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, four treatments contained flowers in good condition 14 days after cutting. All of the flowers were dead in 18 days. Flowers in the control group did not hold up even one day. Cut poinsettias will last longer after being cut if all of the leaves are removed regardless of the treatment.

Table 1.---Condition of cut poinsettias under various treatments for fourteen days.

Number	3 Days	5 Days	6 Days	7 Days	9 Days	14 Days
1	Drooping	Dead	....	....	....	....
2	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good
3	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good
4	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good
5	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Dead	....
6	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good
7	Good	Fair	Drooping	Dead	....	....
8	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Drooping	Dead
9	Drooping	Dead	....	....	....	....
10	Drooping	Dead	....	....	....	....

This may not be practical for certain design work. Therefore, if the leaves are to be left on the stem the best methods would be to place in about 90° F. warm water or else singe the end of the stem with a flame. Placing the stems in boiling water for 30 seconds is satisfactory if the flowers need to last only a few days.

It is advisable to tie the flowers together in small bunches for the first six hours to make sure the heads do not droop and break the stems.

From this preliminary study it does not appear wise to place the cut poinsettias in a 35° F refrigerator over night.