

SHORTER POINSETTIAS

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Last year Mr. Sigvaart Jorgenson (formerly of Rutgers University and now at Shelby, North Carolina) brought forth the idea of "folding down" early propagated poinsettias that were too tall. The method is to squeeze the stem at a point between the nodes to soften it, then fold it over the finger so that the growing tip points down. Repeat the same process at a point on the stem closer to the growing tip so that the growing tip and bracts face upward and are just a few inches above the original fold. If the stems are too hard due to a lack of nitrogen, the folding operation will be rather difficult to accomplish.

The folding not only shortens the plant, but it also brings foliage down to the lower portion of the plant in the event that there has been some foliage loss. In addition, the plants present a more compact, sturdy appearance and larger bracts for the height of the plant. On the other hand, this process adds to the labor required and thus increases the cost of production.

Mr. Jorgenson first suggested that best results are obtained when the operation takes place between October 15 and November 1. Last year poinsettia plants growing in the University of Minnesota greenhouse were folded down at various times from late October to just a few days before Christmas. Results were quite satisfactory in all cases despite the fact that the folding was done by five different persons, none of whom had ever practiced this procedure before. Bract development was equal to that on check plants unless the stem was broken into two separate pieces on one side. This happens only when a person fails to be patient enough. In a discussion which the writer had with Mr. Jorgenson a few weeks ago, the latter agreed that the folding can be done after November 1. Less satisfactory results are usually obtained, however, if the plants are folded down before October 15.

Poinsettias were in relatively short supply for Christmas, 1952. One Twin City retail shop reported that they were unable to obtain enough good quality plants so they bought some tall plants which had lost a portion of the lower foliage. In order to make the plants more presentable, the stems were folded and not one complaint received. A woman employee reported that this was a regular practice in a Florida retail shop where she had worked a few years previously.

It should be remembered, however, that this procedure is offered not as a part of regular poinsettia production, but rather as a means of salvaging excessively tall plants while still presenting a plant of good quality to the public.
