

# POINSETTIA

## Pointers



### Did you know?

The poinsettia is native to Mexico. The ancient Aztecs used poinsettias in their fall celebrations.

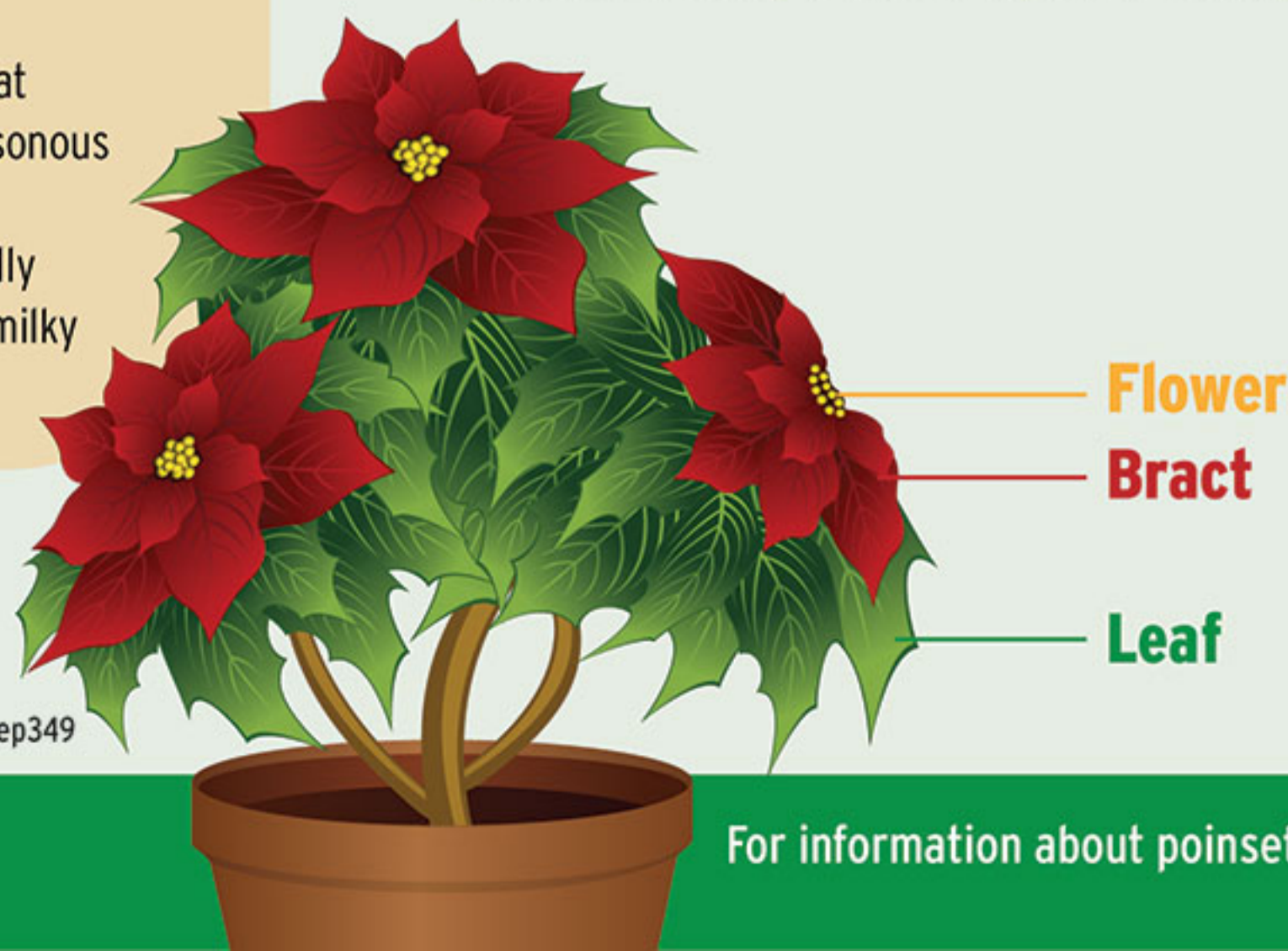
Named for Joel Poinsett, the botanist and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico who introduced the plant to the U.S. in 1825.

The colorful and showy "flower" is actually a cluster of modified leaves called bracts. The true flowers are small and clustered in the center of the bracts.

As a result of intensive breeding, there are more than 150 varieties of poinsettias to choose from.

Research has shown that poinsettias are not poisonous to people or pets, although some are mildly allergic to their white, milky sap.

References:  
Brown, S.P. 2013. *Poinsettias at a Glance*. UF/IFAS EDIS publication ENH1083. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep349>



### Caring for Potted Poinsettias

- 1 They do best on a porch or in a window with indirect sunlight for at least 6 hours per day.
- 2 If indoors, room temperatures of 65° - 70°F are best; keep them away from cold drafts and excessive heat.
- 3 Water thoroughly only when the surface of the soil is dry to the touch; do not water too frequently.
- 4 Indoors, fertilize lightly only every 4-6 weeks.
- 5 In April, when the leaves and bracts begin to deteriorate and fall off, cut the plant back and give it sun, water and fertilizer regularly.
- 6 A real challenge is to reflower plants indoors the next year. In October, start keeping the plant in complete darkness for at least 13-14 hours each day and in bright light the rest of the day. After about 2 months, your plants will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms.

### Poinsettias in the Landscape

- 1 Varieties that naturally bloom in early to mid-November are the best for central and north Florida's landscapes.
- 2 It is best to keep these plants in brighter light during the winter, rather than indoors.
- 3 Plant in early spring as soon as the danger of frost is past. Choose a sunny spot (3-6 hours of sun) that will not receive artificial light at night.
- 4 Cut off fading bracts, leaving 4-6" of the stem on each branch.
- 5 Poinsettias prefer moist, well-drained soils with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5.
- 6 Keep mulched and well-watered until established; fertilize monthly with balanced amounts of nitrogen and potassium, and low phosphorus. Controlled release fertilizers are good.
- 7 Cut back once a month if needed, leaving 4 leaves on shoots; stop pruning in early September.
- 8 Poinsettias are nice in landscape containers, but proper watering is more critical.