Care of

Poinsettia

Gift Plants

Chrysanthemum

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Experiment Station

Cyclamen

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Care of Gift Plants

Many florists' plants are difficult to maintain in the home although the enthusiastic plantsman may enjoy the challenge and attempt to carry them through. In general, any or all of the popular gift plants may suffer some shock when moved from the grower's greenhouse to the lower light conditions, lower humidity and higher temperatures of the average home. Attempts at increasing the light, keeping your plants cool (especially at night) and increasing the humidity around them will usually be rewarded with less yellowing or burning of the foliage and longer lasting blooms.

Most plants will have been fertilized from one to several times a week in the greenhouse; at least weekly applications of a good houseplant fertilizer applied according to the manufacturer's directions will aid in keeping your plant growing. Specific advice for the various popular plants follows.

Azaleas

Azaleas must have plenty of light, humidity (massing them with other plants will help) and cool temperatures to keep blooming. After bloom has ceased, continue fertilization and frequent watering to support the new growth that will be produced and the flower buds that will develop. Azaleas may be plunged, pot and all, into a shaded, sheltered flower bed for the summer months but should be brought into the house before nights become cold. With adequate light, water, fertilization and humidity, intermittent bloom may be seen throughout most of the year, although peak bloom can be expected only during mid-to-late winter. If it becomes necessary to repot, use peat or a mix that is predominantly sand and peat. Fertilize regularly.

Chrysanthemums

Potted, blooming chrysanthemums received from the florist may be in either of two classes. Large-flowered types may be of a variety generally referred to as “greenhouse mums” and are neither hardy enough or early enough to serve as future garden subjects. For this type, light, plenty of water and cool nights will prolong the life of the bloom. After blooming, the plant should be discarded unless the grower has a greenhouse.

The second type, which may sometimes be found on the market in the spring, consist of hardy varieties of mums suitable for garden culture. With this type follow the above practices, but as soon as blooms begin to fade, remove them. When the plants have completed blooming, cut the stems to 2-4 inches in height. Continue with light, water and fertilization to stimulate new growth and keep the plant in active growth until it can be transplanted into the garden in May.

Cyclamen

Cyclamen are distinctly cool-temperature plants and with plenty of water and temperatures around 60 degrees at night, may be kept in bloom for weeks. High night temperatures and little light will cause foliage to yellow and drop and bloom to cease. East window or morning light will usually suffice; water frequently and fertilize at least on a weekly schedule.

Even with the best of care cyclamen will cease to bloom by spring and may then be handled similar to azaleas. Upon returning them to the house by fall, repot the corm in a sandy soil, fertilize and keep them growing at cool temperatures. Although 2 and 3 year old cyclamen are occasionally seen, they are seldom as satisfactory as young plants.
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EASTER LILY

The Easter Lily is a bulbous plant that should not be considered as a permanent house plant. Although the Easter Lily is not fully hardy, some success with it as a garden subject may be enjoyed if a sheltered position is chosen.

When you receive your lily, keep in good light but out of direct hot sun; water frequently and preferably keep temperatures cool. After the blooms have faded continue this treatment until the foliage fades. Then cut the stalk down.

In May, plant the bulb approximately 6 inches deep in a protected spot, such as near your house foundation, and give the plant ordinary care. The Easter Lily will normally re-bloom in September the first year and if it survives the following winters, it can be expected to bloom in July.

POINSETTIA

This popular, large, red-flowered Christmas plant is a native of the tropics and will suffer either from extreme chilling or from hot air currents. Keep it away from doorways or hot air vents. Average or slightly below average temperatures, full light, and frequent watering will greatly prolong the life of the blooms.

To maintain the plant, cut it back to 4-5 inches after the bloom has faded and water more sparingly. Active new growth will usually start in the spring. During the summer the pot may be plunged into a sheltered flower bed and kept growing in that way. Return the plant to the house in late August; cut it back to 4-5 inches again and resume watering and weekly to semi-weekly fertilization. With good light conditions during the day and no light during the evening and night, bloom may be had by Christmas. Light from reading lamps during the evening will delay or prevent bloom.

To produce new plants, take 4-6 inch cuttings between August 15th and 20th and root them in moist, sharp sand or perlite. Cuttings taken from vigorous, active summer growth should root in two weeks. They may then be potted in a light, sandy soil mix and carried along in the same manner as outlined above. Either too little light during the day or too much light after sundown will cause failure to bloom by the holiday season.

HYDRANGEA

This large plant, popular at Easter and Mother’s Day, is available in blue, pink, lavender or white. The plant is essentially a small, forced shrub, and virtually impossible for the home grower to carry over. When a hydrangea is received, keep it from extreme heat or drying air currents and water plentifully, as the plant has a very high moisture requirement. Fertilization with house plant fertilizers may help prolong the life of the blooms. When they have faded, the plant is generally discarded, as it is not hardy or capable of bloom without green-house growing conditions.

RAMBLER ROSE

The rambler rose as a potted plant is usually received only in the spring and should be considered as a house plant only until it can be safely planted out of doors. Keep the plant well lighted, moderately watered and regularly fertilized even after the bloom has faded. After blooming, cut back flowering branches but keep the plant growing until it can be planted out of doors in late May. With a sunny site and good soil, the rose may continue to give you summer bloom for many years.

Loss of foliage from yellowing (may be due to too high night temperatures) or from spider-mite injury (usually becoming speckled, and later drying) does not necessarily mean death of the plant. Spraying with Malathion or other miticides for spider-mites and improvement of general growing conditions may save your plant until it can be transferred to the garden.

SPRING BULBS: TULIPS, HYACINTHS, NARCISSUS

From late winter to early spring, pots of blooming spring bulbs may be received as gift plants. All of these - tulips, hyacinths, narcissus and even crocus - are plants that normally bloom in the cool temperatures of spring and are not harmed by temperatures as low as 35-40 degrees. To prolong the life of the bloom, keep them cool, water frequently and keep them in full light, although away from hot sun. Continue these growing conditions until the foliage yellows, at which time the pots may be dried off and stored in the basement or other frost-free storage area.

The bulbs from these pots should not be used for forcing again but may be planted in the garden or yard the following September. Generally tulips will give satisfactory to good performance while hyacinths and daffodils may give satisfactory results if planted in sheltered areas or given a winter mulch.