

Are poinsettias poisonous?

Christmas trees, Santa Claus, menorahs, and glittering lighting displays are just a few of the many prominent symbols of the holiday season. And while mistletoe might garner more attention and inspire more displays of affection, poinsettias are another prominent sign that the holiday season has arrived.

Thanks to its bright red and green colors, the poinsettia is perhaps the ideal holiday plant. But as much as it suits holiday decor and seems tailor-made for that special time of year between Thanksgiving and the first of January, the poinsettia has a reputation that few plants would want.

First discovered in Mexico and brought to the United States by Dr. Joel Poinsett, the poinsettia has long been rumored to be poisonous. However, the National Capital Poison Center notes that poinsettias are not deadly. In fact, the NCPC notes that the rumor that poinsettias are deadly may have been around for more than a century, tracing its origins all the way back to a child who was found dead lying next to a poinsettia plant. The plant was blamed for the child's death, and even though that blame was misplaced, the stigma stuck. WebMD notes that others trace the false rumors surrounding poinsettias to 1919, when parents blamed the death of their daughter, who they thought had eaten poinsettia leaves, on this ubiquitous holiday plant.

Even today, when researchers have long since proven that poinsettias are not deadly, many people still believe they can be fatal if consumed.

The NCPC notes that, in most cases, exposure to any part of a poinsettia plant in children or pets has little, if any, effect. However, if the plant is swallowed, some people and pets may experience symptoms including nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Some who touch the plant may develop a rash after contact.

While poinsettias are not deadly, the NCPC still

advises those who plant to include the plant in their holiday decor to take every measure necessary to prevent children and pets from swallowing it. Placing poinsettias beyond the reach of kids and pets is one simple way to accomplish just that.

Poinsettias are seemingly everywhere come the holiday season. And because they're not fatal, celebrants can continue to display these beautiful plants that call to mind the colors of the holiday season.



Get gifts there on time

Thanks to families being more spread out than ever before, today's holiday shoppers must figure out ways to get holiday gifts to their destination on time. The holiday season tends to be the busiest time of year for many delivery services. The following tips should help shoppers ensure their loved ones' gifts arrive on time.

- Ship directly. Adobe Analytics reported that online shopping hit a record high of \$108.2 billion in the 2017 holiday shopping season, and all indicators suggest online shopping will only increase in the years to come. Holiday shoppers who want to ensure their loved ones will receive their gifts on time can rely on online shopping. When checking out, have gifts shipped directly to loved ones' homes. Many online retailers will even wrap gifts for a nominal fee.
- Research shipping options. In 2018, Christmas falls on a Tuesday. Shoppers who plan to rely on two-day or overnight shipping should keep that in mind. Some delivery services may be open throughout the weekend before Christmas, while others may only be open on Saturday. Last-minute shoppers, whether they're shopping online or in-person, should confirm of up to \$100. (Note: Declared value is the carrier's maximum liability.) Purchasing additional insurance can ease shoppers' concerns about lost or stolen packages. Just be sure to keep all invoices and receipts in case claims must be filed. Shoppers also should ask for tracking numbers on all packages so they can confirm when packages are delivered.
- Properly secure the package. Many delivery services now have off-site drop-off boxes that can make it easy to send gifts. This is a convenient service, but shoppers who use them won't be able to have a company employee provide in-person confirmation that their packages are secured to company standards. Poorly packaged items may never be shipped. Visit the shipping company's website for packaging guidelines, and include a business card and duplicate label inside the package just in case it is damaged after being dropped off.

their shipping options well in advance of Christmas. Because Christmas is on a Tuesday this year, getting gifts to their destination on time may require shoppers to purchase and ship them earlier than they otherwise might.

- Purchase package insurance. Consumer Reports notes that UPS and FedEx shipments automatically come with declared-value coverage



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