

## THE WEEDPATCH

Missoula Garden Club Newsletter

### GREETINGS & SALUTATIONS TO MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE GARDEN CLUB

Our next gathering will be our Christmas Party at Cheryl Carroll's home, 4327 Edward Ave, 1:00 PM on December 15th. Please bring finger foods, and a gift of \$15.00 for the Gift Exchange.

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### BIRTHDAYS IN DECEMBER

Our beautiful Karen Gardner was born on December 2. I'm so sorry to be late in sending this greeting, and I hope your special day was just as wonderful as you. And guess who else was born in this frigid weather....none other than Rotten Ron, as he calls himself, arriving on December 11. Our own Ron Dowell decided to descend on this planet and get home to gather up all the Christmas presents he could. Happy Birthday to two special people during this wonderful season of Hope and Promise.

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### Poinsettia Legend and History

**Poinsettias (*euphorbia pulcherrima*)** are native to Mexico and Central America. The Aztecs called it cuetlaxochitl. Poinsettias were introduced in the United States in 1825 by Joel Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, and quickly caught on as a popular Christmas plant. Poinsettias have thin, pale green leaves. When in bloom, they display brightly colored bracts (red, pink, or white) on the top of each stem. Although many mistakenly think that these bracts are flower petals, the actual flowers are the tiny yellow clusters found at the center of the bracts (Bracts are simply leaves masquerading as petals). Another common misconception is that the plant is poisonous. Like most euphorbias, the sap is a little caustic and may cause skin irritation, and certainly indigestion if digested, but if you're going to knock the hubby off for the insurance money (there's a cheery holiday thought...), find another plant.

#### Forcing Poinsettias to Bloom

Poinsettias bloom in response to shortening daylight hours. If you wish to coax your poinsettia to bloom in time for the holidays, you will need to put the plant in total darkness for at least twelve hours (fourteen is better) each night for approximately ten weeks (this also applies to forcing Christmas Cacti to bloom). Late September or early October is a good time to begin this regimen. You can place your plant inside a box, a cupboard, or a closet to achieve complete darkness. Be sure to bring your plant out during the day and place it in a bright, sunny spot. After it flowers,

gradually decrease the water until the bracts all drop, then allow the plant to dry out completely (like many of the euphorbias, this is a desert plant). Store in a place with cooler temperatures (50 degrees); remember we are trying to recreate a Mexican Winter, so a 50 degree basement or garage makes a fine location.

When it really begins to warm up again (Late May for us, but just so long as you're around 50 degree evenings), repot your mummy in the same pot with fresh soil and start to water again (we stopped gradually and that's a good way to start) and fertilize (also gradually). Around August, cut the plant back by a third and make a decision. Do we want bushy with small flowers or shrubby with big flowers (my pick)? If we choose the latter we cut the plant back to three to five stems and grow it out (remember gloves if you have sensitive skin). A poinsettia can look quite lovely when planted with foliage plants with contrasting leaf color, shape, and/or size. Don't prune your plant any later than September, however, if you wish to force it to bloom for Christmas.

### Poinsettia Care

Poinsettias like lots of bright, indirect sunlight and prefer humid conditions (so you may want to mist your plant if your home is very dry due to heating or climate). As for watering, let the soil dry out between watering. The soil should be dry to the touch. Also, be sure not to let the plants pot stand in water at the plants base or saucer (A layer of pebbles in the bottom of the tray keeps the plant out of the water and increases the humidity around the plant). Poinsettias are sensitive to extreme temperature, so don't place your plant next to a heater or near a drafty window or doorway. A daytime temp of around 65 degrees and nights around 60 degrees will provide perfect conditions for your poinsettia. Whitefly can sometimes be a pest for this plant; check your purchase closely. If you pick it up, and things fly, and they're white, well, there it is. Pretty easily taken care of with insecticidal soap.

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### EASY SAUSAGE STRATA

- 1 pound pork sausage
- 6 (1 ounce) slices bread, cubed
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 6 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground dry mustard

- Place sausage in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium-high heat until evenly brown. Drain, and set aside.
- Layer bread cubes, sausage, and Cheddar cheese in a lightly greased 7x11 inch baking dish. In a bowl, beat together the eggs, milk, salt, and mustard. Pour the egg mixture over the bread cube mixture. Cover, and refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight.
- Remove the casserole from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
- Bake 50 to 60 minutes in the preheated oven, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

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## *Christmas Is Coming*

**Anon**



Christmas is coming,  
 The geese are getting fat  
 Please put a penny  
 In the old man's hat  
 If you haven't got a penny  
 A ha'penny will do;  
 If you haven't got a ha'penny  
 Then God bless you!

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My prayers for you are that you have a Christmas filled with joy and all the awe and wonder of a small child. God Bless you and your families. Gloria