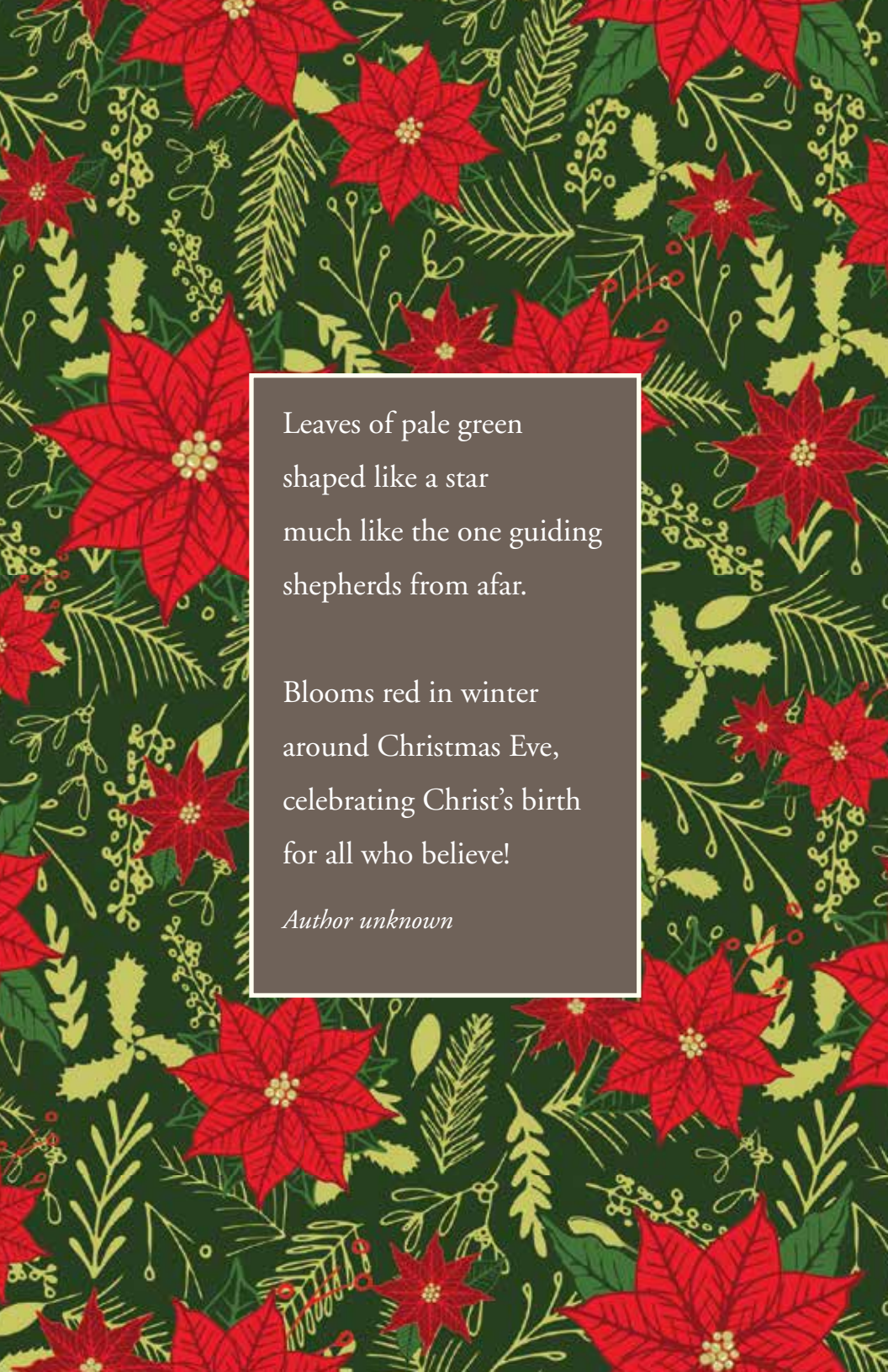


Making Seasons Bright

A festive, fascinating look at the poinsettia





Leaves of pale green
shaped like a star
much like the one guiding
shepherds from afar.

Blooms red in winter
around Christmas Eve,
celebrating Christ's birth
for all who believe!

Author unknown

Red, across a rich color spectrum from scarlet to crimson and bright red to burgundy denoting excitement and energy. White, pure and innocent; cream, calm and quiet. Bright yellow, symbolizing hope; dark golden, reflecting wealth in family and joy. Orange, pink, pale green, purple... even blue, though rare.

They seemingly appear out of nowhere to remind us that Christmastime is here.

Welcome, poinsettias. Welcome, holidays.
Welcome, Christmas.

Q: *What do poinsettias, the Smithsonian and Mexico have in common?*

A: *A man named Poinsett.*

It was his passion for botany that led Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and later the founder of the Smithsonian, to introduce the poinsettia to the United States in 1825. Poinsett propagated the yet-to-be-named-for-him plants from Mexico in the backyard hothouse of his South Carolina home and gave them to friends and botanical garden owners. This was the beginning of a fragrant, colorful snowball.

One such recipient, John Bartram of Philadelphia, passed along his plant to Robert Buist, a nurseryman, who sold the plant under its botanical name, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*. As the botanical snowball grew, the plant became known as the poinsettia around 1836.



leg·end

/ˈleɪənd/

noun

1. a traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but unauthenticated “Legend of the Flowers of the Holy Night “

synonyms: myth, saga, epic, folk tale, folk story, traditional story, tale, story, fairytale, narrative, fable, romance, folklore, lore, mythology, fantasy, oral history, tradition



Looooooooong ago in the 16th century on a star-lit Christmas Eve, families in Cuernavaca, Mexico, gathered outside the great cathedral. The townspeople wore festive clothing, carried candles, beamed with joy and sang harmoniously. The clear evening sky was so full of stars that their sparkle reflected onto Cuernavaca below.

Herein lies the Legend of the Flowers of the Holy Night.

As the story goes, every person brought a gift for the Christ Child. Women brought bright-color blankets and men carried shiny candelabras and handmade carved boxes, while others brought jewels, pendants, paintings, goblets, lace and piñatas. Children presented baskets overflowing with fruits and pastries. Yes, it was a joyful time indeed as gifts were bestowed at the cathedral’s altar on Christmas Eve. While people raved about their fine gifts of beauty and value, applause and admiration filled the air.

“If only...” thought young Pepita, an orphaned peasant in tattered clothing who was recognized by many but who always stood away from the crowd, and on this night beyond the gathering under a lamplight.

Tears rolled down her face as Pepita wished that she, too, could offer something to the Christ Child. With a generous heart, the young girl closed her eyes and prayed quietly, wishing for one small gift to give. Her eyes turned to the stars and she prayed again.

Cuernavaca’s townspeople had celebrated Christmas for nine days, as was the tradition, going from house to house to bake, press clothing, shine silver and watch their children play games. Young Pepita, wearing tattered clothing and with nothing to give, stood alone once more, despite wanting to join the festivities.

Turning to the stars, yet again, Pepita whispered that one day she’d have a gift to bring to the Christ Child and would celebrate with all the townspeople. About that time, the cathedral bells began to chime, and a glorious angel appeared before the young girl, who was initially in disbelief.

The angel told Pepita to gather the weeds from the patch beside her and take them to the Christ Child as a gift that would be welcomed. Despite her fear and confusion, she followed the angel’s instructions, gathered an armful of weeds and made it to the top step of the cathedral to follow the townspeople into the nave just as the last chime sounded.

After bowing her head for a brief prayer, Pepita began her slow walk as a peasant with a gift of weeds toward the alter. With each step, the stalks began to burst into flames and, just as suddenly, into beautiful flaming red flowers that became a stunning bouquet. Children and adults alike gasped, calling out “Flor de fuego” – flower of fire – and “La Flor de Nochebuena” – flower of the Holy Night.

With tremendous pride and great pleasure, Pepita was filled with the greatest joy of her lifetime as she placed her gift amongst the others.

The poinsettia – that flower of fire, that beautiful red flower of the Holy Night – continues to be displayed around the world to celebrate the mystery and the wonder of Christmas.

Poinsettia Infographic

BY THE COLORS

Popularity Hierarchy



¾ of all sales (red)



(white and pink)



(pink) (burgundy) (salmon) (apricot) (yellow) (white)



(speckled and marbled varieties of blended colors)



(new varieties introduced annually)

BY THE NUMBERS

34 million sold*

\$149 million in sales*

100 varieties

6% sales increase*

all **50** states grow poinsettias commercially

Texas is a Top **3** grower

can grow to **10-15** feet

12.12 is Poinsettia Day

\$250 million contribution to the economy

No. **1** Christmas plant

6-week sales period

**Source: USDA Floriculture Statistics Report 2018*

BY THE NAMES

PREMIUM PICASSO

MONET TWILIGHT

SHIMMER

SURPRISE

PRESTIGE RED

LOBSTER FLOWER

FLAME LEAF FLOWER

CHRISTMAS FLOWER

CROWN OF THE ANDES

BY THE FACTS

- Poinsettias are the most sold of all potted flowering plants
- Easter lilies are a very distant second
- The poinsettia is a perennial shrub
- Poinsettia Day is December 12 to commemorate the death of Joel Roberts Poinsett
- “How do I get the poinsettia to rebloom” is the most frequently asked question about the plant.



- Poinsettia is native to Mexico
- Aztecs used bracts for fabric dye
- Aztecs used the sap for medicines



The Poinsettia Bowl game was first played in 1952. It continued annually until 1995.

POINSETTIA

BY THE CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Place the poinsettia in a bright sunny room.
- Ideal temperature range is 60-70° F.
- Keep plant away from drafts and fireplace.
- Water thoroughly. Allow soil to dry before watering again.
- Put in sunshine if leaves become light green.

Bracts: colorful modified leaves that surround the flower

Flowers: small, yellow at the center





*Like the Legend of the Flowers of the Holy Night,
our wish for you during this Christmas season and
throughout the new year is the humble gift of love,
the possibility for miraculous transformation
and the hope that blooms bright during the holidays.*



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