in the photo: Christmas plants add a bit of festive color to our homes and with a little care can last for years to come. With the proper growing conditions they will continue to reward you with holiday color.

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week
by Debbie Lauer

Christmas Plant Care

This is the season of giving and chances are you will either receive a live plant as a gift or you will buy one for yourself to decorate your home during this festive season. Poinsettias and Christmas Cactus can put on a spectacular display that will last long after Christmas. Unfortunately most of these plants will be discarded at the end of the season when they could be beautiful houseplants and with some tending can be brought to bloom in the following year.

Poinsettias are tropical plants and don’t like the cold. Put your Poinsettia in a place where it will receive at least six hours of bright light a day, but avoid direct sunlight. Keep the soil damp not soggy. The ideal temperature for Poinsettias is 68-70 degrees. Don’t fertilize the plant while in bloom and place plants in groups, as they will benefit from the humidity generated by the presence of other plants.

A Christmas Cactus can also bring lots of color into the home during the holidays. The flowers may not last as long as the Poinsettia but they do bloom abundantly. Christmas Cactus requires full sunlight in the winter months and cool temperatures 65 degrees or lower. Let the soil dry out before watering. After enjoying it at Christmas it may bloom again at Easter. These plants like to be pot-bound. Only repot every three years.

Visit aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu to learn more about these plants. This web site has tips on getting your Poinsettia to re-bloom year after year. and can answer other plant questions as well.