

# Poinsettias at home on a number of continents



## Origin: Central and South America.

Its international popularity means that it is now an established part of the Christmas decorations in numerous other countries. Not only that: this attractive winter bloomer is one of the most popular indoor plants throughout the world, with enthusiasts in countries as widespread as Egypt, Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, South Africa, Taiwan and Turkey, and the numbers are growing. Whether it is known as the 'Christ Star' or 'Ataturk's Flower', whether at Chinese New Year or the Jewish Festival of Lights, no other plant bridges the divide between people, cultures and traditions across the continents in the way that the poinsettia does.

## In its home country Mexico

The poinsettia is called 'La Flor de Nochebuena'—the Christmas Eve Flower—it has been directly associated with Christmas since the 16th century. Its international role as a Christmas plant began in the early 20th century, and on illustrious ground: Los Angeles' Hollywood Boulevard, no less, where he began to sell poinsettia stems successfully as 'Christmas flowers' there was a German immigrant family called Ecke. In the 1950s it also became possible to cultivate poinsettias as indoor plants. This paved the way for people in numerous other countries. Whether it was known as the '*Adventsstern*', '*Christmas Star*' or '*Stella di Natale*', the plant rapidly became part of households throughout Europe.

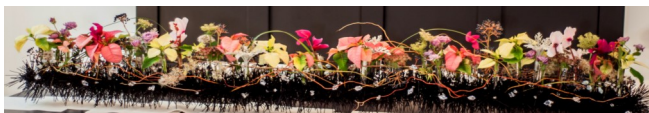
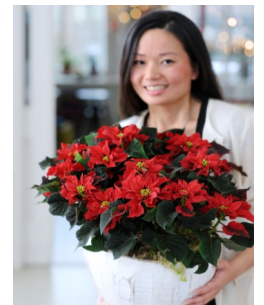


## In Europe,

The poinsettia is an established feature of the Christmas tradition. With its star-shaped leaves and traditional red and green colouring it is the ideal symbol of the season. Today, poinsettias are used as decorations to create a festive atmosphere throughout the entire world, particularly in Europe, but also in the USA and Canada, as well as, in recent times, South Africa and Australia. People in India traditionally decorate their churches with lights and poinsettias.

## Christmas herald in the west, New Year's plant and 'Atatürk's flower'

In the winter season the houses of numerous other countries around the world are also decorated with the poinsettia. The winter flower is also gaining more followers in East Asian countries, such as China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea where, western-style Christmas celebrations are becoming increasingly popular, especially among young people and in the cities. This has allowed the poinsettia, as part of the western Christmas culture, to gain access into these countries. The poinsettia now even appears as a decoration and gift at both the Japanese New Year celebrations, and the Chinese New Year, which is traditionally celebrated between January 21st and February 21st.



## In Turkey and Egypt

Poinsettias have a long tradition with no reference to Christmas. The attractive winter plant was in fact already being cultivated when it was still unknown to Europe. In Turkey it is known as Atatürk's Flower. It is named in memory of General Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the modern-day Republic of Turkey. The poinsettia was one of the favourite plants of the leader, who was popularly known as Atatürk (father of the Turks). It was under his name that it became so widespread throughout Turkey. In Egypt the poinsettia was already being cultivated in the 1860's. In reference to the poinsettia's 'official discoverer', the first US American ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett, the Egyptians call it 'Bent El Consul', the daughter of the consul. Poinsettias are widely used for decorations in both Turkey and Egypt.

## A star joins people of many nations

Today, poinsettias come in numerous different colours, forms and sizes, with new varieties being added every year. Whether scarlet red, delicate pink, shocking pink, bright yellow or stately cream-white, two-toned marbled or speckled, with rounded or jagged-edged leaves, from delicate miniatures to opulent bushes—poinsettias are right for everyone, no matter how much their tastes differ.

Their diversity of colour and form and their amazing versatility have allowed them to become an integral part of the most diverse traditions, cultures and home furnishing styles.

Who knows where the poinsettia will find a new home this coming winter – its story is far from being over.

