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Holiday House Plants Offer Lasting Cheer

If your holiday season is brightened by a colorful poinsettia plant this year, or maybe a Jerusalem cherry in full fruit, or one of the handsome foliage house plants, you can enjoy them a long time by giving them good care, says Miss Verna Stanton, assistance state agent for the State College Extension Service.

For instance, if you give your poinsettia a four-months' rest in a cool place where it won't freeze, it will flower again next winter. The soil around the plant will dry out, but it should not be watered during this period, Miss Stanton says.

About the first of May, cut the poinsettia back if there is too much old wood, then shake or wash the old soil from the roots and repot. The plant will then be ready to start life anew in a light, warm place. It will need watering whenever the soil looks dry.

Set it out of doors as soon as the nights are no longer cold in a hole as deep as the pot. Place the plant—pot and all—in the hole, and when growth starts, support the stems with stakes. The plant should be returned indoors when there is a chance for frost in the fall. Miss Stanton says, and room temperature should be kept between 60 and 65 degrees. Supply the plant with a little liquid manure about once a week—and there should be plenty of blooms for Christmas, 1947!

The Jerusalem cherry, and other similar house plants that convey Christmas spirit should be cared for in much the same manner as poinsettias, Miss Stanton says.

THAT'S RICH!

A National Contributor's Column

By Rich Fowler

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THE HOME-MADE TREE

A "home-made" Christmas tree we had. When I was just a little lad— No "boughten" tinsel balls and strings— Electric lights were unknown things. But weeks before the crucial date, Ma would let us sit up late, Till nine, or even ten o'clock, And make free with her kitchen stock: We'd string cranberries red and bright, And fresh-popped corn all snowy-white— A string of each alone, we'd fix 'em— And sometimes on one string we'd mix 'em To lend variety and spice: And Ma would look and say: "That's nice!" Then from her cherished kitchen boards She'd bring bright apples, beans, and gourds— To see which one could best invent His own new Christmas ornament! (An apple, using beans for eyes, Becomes a Magi old and wise— Aided by a broomstraw beard To make his prophecy revered.) And we would cut a paper star To guide our wise men from afar.

The years have passed, and nowadays A Christmas tree's a tinsel maze— But I often think of the home-made tree, And how much home it made for me!

LAST CHRISTMAS DAY, I was at sea, but very thankfully on my way home. You may recall what terrific storms were tossing the Atlantic at that time. Waves were taller than our masts, and we heard on the radio of soldiers and sailors getting their legs and arms broken on other ships—but fortunately nothing like that happened to our men.

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, a religious service was held in the main dining salon—the boy who led it was a sergeant, a pastor in civilian life who had not elected to become a chaplain.

JUST BEFORE THE SERVICE, the seas calmed down almost miraculously. The sergeant's theme was that although we were sorely disappointed at not being with our loved ones on that day, we were thankful for having come safely thus far. Amen—

ALL CHRISTMAS DAY, THE SEAS were calm—but toward midnight they rose again—as if that one day HAD BEEN A SPECIAL GIFT—a precious GIFT OF PEACE amid the SEAS OF TURMOIL.

IT'S A GIFT

He says his painting is a gift— (Give it back!) And her singing is a gift— (Give it back!) Monologues are sonny's gift— While sister's wit is swift And mimicry's her gift— (Give it back!)

Uncle's whittling is a gift— (Give it back!) Egbert's whistling is a gift— (Give it back!)

In my lute there is a gift, And I guess you get the drift— In my family's greatest gift! (Hey, there—where you takin' me?) Joe the Schroe, Deer Island, Maine.

SHORT CHRISTMAS STORY

When Santy was a little boy he was sent to the store to buy his Mother a package of chewing-gum, only she forgot to give him the nickel. So that is why they called him "sent nickel-less." —Bobby Trainor, age 9, Bay Springs, Miss.

GO TO SLEEP

"Go to sleep, sonny— Dream of Christmas morn—" (It was on a Christmas That our Hope was born.)

There's your tiny stocking Hung before the grate— (I can see the humble cows Kneel 'mid Lords of State.)

"Go to sleep, sonny— May you waken still In a world of sunshine— Peace on Earth, Good Will!" —Another Mary, Hubbard, Tex.

TRAFFIC THOUGHT FOR TODAY

When at the wheel, be careful of which curves you hug!

PARTING SHOTS

"... Merry Christmas to all, and to all, Good Night!" —R. F.

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