

Getting Your Poinsettias Ready For Holidays

Dear Plant Doctor: I have a nice poinsettia plant. What will I need to do to get it ready for the Christmas season?—Wilmington

ANSWER: The story of the poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is truly a "weed-to-flower" story. The poinsettia has risen from a lowly weed in Central America to THE Christmas flower of the United States. Flowering the poinsettia for Christmas can be trying, but with a little patience and perseverance, you should not have any trouble.

To flower the poinsettia by Christmas, bring healthy, vigorous, disease-free and insect-free plants indoors right now. Place in a sunny window where plants have a nighttime temperature of 65 degrees and a daytime temperature of 70 or higher.

Plants will have to be shaded so that they will receive 12 to 14 hours of absolute unbroken darkness. If this dark period is interrupted by a flashlight, lamp or any other light, then the poinsettia will not bloom properly.

This shading should continue on a daily basis for 25 days and by mid-November you should see flower buds on shoot tips. Once the buds have formed, then you will no longer need to continue the shading.

Fertilize the plant every other day, watering with a quarter-strength nutrient fertilizer and use a soluble plant fertilizer that contains all trace elements.

The recipe sounds simple, but

Health Students' Walk-a-Thon To Benefit St. Jude

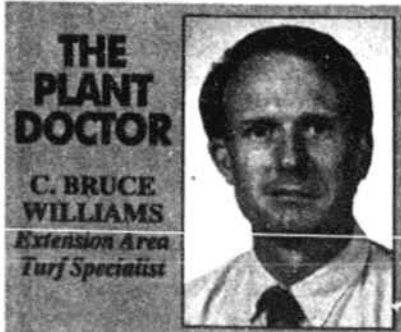
West Brunswick High School's Health Occupations students will sponsor a Walk-a-thon/Trike-a-thon Oct. 16 to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

The event begins at 3 p.m. at the West Brunswick High School football stadium track.

Volunteer walkers and tricycle riders are needed for the event to raise funds for the research center's battle against childhood cancer and other catastrophic childhood diseases.

Participants will ask sponsors to make donations based on the laps completed around the track. All riders and walkers turning in money will receive certificates. Those who raise \$35 or more will also receive a St. Jude T-shirt. Those who raise \$75 or more will be awarded a sports bag, also.

For details on participating as a walker, rider or sponsor, call Jeannette Mintz, Tracy Reaves or any HOSA member at WBHS. The school phone number is 754-4338.



THE PLANT DOCTOR
C. BRUCE WILLIAMS
Extension Area Turf Specialist

dents to grow a crop of poinsettias for a "practical" greenhouse production project. After students worked for over 3 months on the crop, most felt poinsettias were a bargain in the store. I think you will feel the same way by Christmas. Good luck.

Dear Plant Doctor: Please tell me the reason my plum trees have had worms. The first time the trees had worms, not a worm could be found. But in the past three years so many worms infested the fruit we could not eat them.

I have sprayed the trees with an

insecticide, but nothing has worked. The plums are so big and pretty, but full of worms.—Evergreen

ANSWER: Sounds like you have met the plum curculio (*Conotrachelus nenuphar*). The female plum curculio beetle eats a small spot on a young plum, peach, apple, cherry, apricot, nectarine or pear, and then lays a single white egg in a crescent-shaped hole on the eaten spot. The egg hatches in 2 to 12 days at which time the larva eats its way to the seed or pit.

A single female plum curculio

can lay over 1,000 fertilized eggs. As you have found, plums remain on the tree, infested with the larva, until ripe. The mature larva will eventually exit the fruit and burrow into the ground beneath the tree and pupate. Next spring the pupated plum curculio will emerge and the cycle will start over again.

To control the plum curculio in badly infested orchards, you will have to use cultural practices, insecticide sprays and the removal of all infested fruits. Once this pest becomes established in an area, the on-

ly way to achieve effective control is to take vigorous control measures.

Fruit insecticide sprays beginning at petal fall in the spring should continue every 7 to 10 days until fruit is mature. Pick up and destroy all infested fruit. Plastic sheets can be placed under infested trees during the spring to catch the adult weevils when the tree is shaken. Destroy all weevils that are captured on the sheet.

Send your gardening questions and comments to the Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia NC 28422.

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