

# Agriculture

## Tips on caring for living plants given as Christmas presents

The Norfolk Island pine is one of the few Christmas plants that is blossomless. Yet *Arucaria heterophylla* has become increasingly popular as a living Christmas tree, or Yuletide gift.

Norfolk Island pines are dark, dark green, almost perfectly symmetrical, with needles that are smooth and nice to the touch. This native of Norfolk Island in the South Pacific will grow to 200 feet in its natural habitat, but don't get your hopes up. While there are beautiful specimens in some states south of us, these pines should be treated in our area as a houseplant, much the same as sheffleras and other large plants.

Give Norfolk pines as much light as possible in the winter, shifting it about a quarter turn once a week to prevent its leaning toward the light. Night temperatures should range from 50 to 65 degrees while day temperatures of 65 to 75 are ideal.

Water when the top layer of soil feels very dry, not before, as wet feet will cause this plant to keel right over. On the other hand, lack of humidity will cause lower branches and needles to drop. Place the plant on a bed of pebbles and fill the container with water. Do not allow water to touch the root system.

Fertilize Norfolk pines every two months with a liquid fertilizer that is recommended for foliage plants. In the summer, place the plant in a protected place away from direct sunlight. Maintain adequate moisture.

**Poinsettias**  
Hopefully you obtained your poinsettia during its bud stage, so you may watch its flayboyant bracts unfold before your eyes. If you didn't, that's fine, too, just so you got at least one of this favorite Christmas bloomer.

First of all, check the poinsettia for



greenhouse white fly, which could infect your other houseplants. Shake a branch. Little flies will erupt from the undersides of the leaves, where they have been busy laying eggs. Spray with an aerosol, isolate the plant for 24 hours to kill any egg masses that are visible.

OK, that was the bad news. Next thing to do is enjoy. Keep poinsettias in a sunny, cool location, in an area where they will not be bumped up against. They damage easily. Water

when the soil surface is quite dry. After two weeks, remove any decorative foil, which will encourage root rot by allowing water to pool in the bottom. If possible, place poinsettias on pebble beds for controlled moisture. Fertilize once a month with half-strength liquid fertilizer for house plants.

If you really feel impelled to keep a poinsettia after its flowering, be sure to prune it back in April, and place outside in a spot away from wind. It may or may not bloom again, certainly not next Christmas, unless you go through all the machinations of a big-time nursery that artificially induces premature Christmas bloom.

Poinsettias are a short-day plant, needing at least eight hours of total darkness. Fall nights will cue it in on blooming, but not in time for the holidays. Why not say "Thank You," consign it to the compost pile—and start reading the new garden catalogs instead. That'll keep you plenty busy.

## Agricultural research benefits consumers

USDA's ag research labs have completed several research projects that are just as beneficial to consumers as they are to farmers.

One example is an innovative way to remove the bitterness from grapefruit juice. Scientists used a by-product from the manufacture of corn sweeteners as a filter to remove the substance that makes grapefruit juice bitter.

USDA's ag scientists can take credit for creating a new market for U.S. walnut producers. Japan had quarantined U.S. walnuts because we couldn't guarantee they were free of the codling moth. Experiments with a fumigant and vacuum pressure solved the problem and Japan lifted the import ban.

Consumers are demanding more



lamb meat and more natural fibers in clothing. U.S. sheep producers are supplying the lamb, using meat type animals, but they find the wool does not compete too well with imported wool. USDA scientists, experimenting with bleaching and cleansing methods, are making U.S. wool competitive.

Consumers who are looking for greater variety in the produce departments of supermarkets will benefit from USDA's work on several exotic fruits. Plant scientists who used cross breeding techniques to bring us the avocado and the mango are hoping to use cross breeding techniques to bring us the avocado and the mango are hoping to use similar methods to introduce tropical delicacies such as passion fruit.

In this age of budget-cutting one of the first cuts usually recommended is agricultural research.

Let us not forget that it is consumers who ultimately benefit from all agricultural research. It is therefore in the consumer's interest to support adequate funding for agricultural research.

## Tips for cooking holiday turkey

Was your Thanksgiving turkey a little tough? Did the breast dry out before the bird had finished cooking?

If you had problems, you may want to try cooking a pre-basted turkey in an oven cooking bag. This moist-heat cooking method produces a moist, tender bird.

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Shake 1 tablespoon of flour in the bag to prevent it from bursting. Place celery and onion slices in the bottom of the bag to keep the turkey from sticking and to add flavor. Place the turkey on top of the vegetables, close the bag with the tie that came with

the bag and make 6 half-inch slits in the top to let steam escape.

If you want to use a meat thermometer, insert it into the bird through one of the slits in the bag. The turkey will be done when it reaches 180 to 185 degrees.

When the turkey is done, cut or slit the top of the bag down the center.

A cooking bag shortens the cooking time. Cook an 8 to 12 pound bird for 1 1/2 to 2 1/4 hours if it is unstuffed and 2 1/4 to 2 3/4 hours if the bird is stuffed. A 12 to 16 pound bird should be cooked 2 1/4 to 2 3/4 hours if it is unstuffed and 2 3/4 to 3 1/4 hours if it is

stuffed.

Cooking times for a 16 to 20 pound bird are 2 3/4 to 3 1/4 hours for an unstuffed bird and 3 1/4 to 3 3/4 hours for a stuffed turkey.

Ordinary brown paper bags are not recommended for use as an oven cooking bag. They may not be sanitary, and the glue and ink used on the bags have not been approved for use as cooking materials. Some give off unhealthy fumes. Finally, the juices may saturate the bag and cause it to break during cooking.

## NC Farm Bureau holds convention

Delegated to the 51st annual convention of the North Carolina Farm Bureau completed policy deliberations on Wednesday covering a wide range of farm problems, both state and national.

Approved resolutions become official state Farm Bureau policies for 1987. Resolutions dealing with national issues are forwarded to the American Farm Bureau convention for consideration.

W.B. Jenkins was unanimously re-elected president of the state farm organization. Re-elected to serve with him for another one-year term were Vice Presidents Atlas Wooten, Greenville; S.E. Johnston, Fletcher; and J.M. Wright, Jr., Reidsville. Elmer Burt of Fuquay-Varina was re-elected secretary-treasurer, and John N. Parker of Raleigh was re-elected assistant to the president.

Jenkins announced a membership gain of 13,000 member families for the year. All 100 county Farm Bureaus reached quota.

Delegated approved a resolution supporting the concept of lease and transfer (of flue-cured tobacco) within the county provided it does not jeopardize the tobacco program.

In other areas, voting delegated: Recommended that one governmental agency be responsible for tempo-

rary migrant housing inspections. Recommended that the NC Department of Agriculture remain a separate agency of state government. As part of the same resolution, delegates said, "We insist that the office of the Commissioner of Agriculture and other elective Council of State members remain elective positions subject to the will of North Carolina voters. Recommended that the county property tax be reduced and supplemented with a county sales and/or income tax if it is in the best interest of farmers. Opposed the excise taxing (both state and federal) of agriculture products unless it is of benefit to the producers of those products. Recommended more emphasis on establishing companies in North Carolina which would process, handle and distribute North Carolina farm products.

Recommended support for the continuing development of a state farmers' market system. Recommended that farmers employing and housing ten or less migrant workers, who do not have a crew leader and who furnish their own transportation, be exempt from the Temporary Labor Camp Standards of North Carolina.

Recommended that state government continue to have primary re-

sponsibility for the construction, maintenance, location and policing of highways. Supported economic inducements by state and local people to encourage doctors to practice in rural areas. Supported farm legislation and programs for agricultural commodities that will assure adequate food and fiber for consumers and provide an opportunity for farmers to make a profit. Recommended that policies on land use affecting farms be administered by agricultural agencies located in each county that understand agricultural activities. Supported the law protecting established farms and/or livestock operations from nuisance suits when such farms and livestock operations were not nuisances at the time.

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