



Pest Corner

December, 2007

Adapted from articles by Don Tapio, Extension Agent. Submitted by Cecilia, Ocean Shores.

December is for some of us the month of the year when we could have one last chance to finish what remains undone in our gardens. If this is not possible, we may just forgive ourselves, and instead make a resolution for things to be different next year. Or, perhaps, we will only trust that nature will take care of itself for a while, and concentrate in what we can do for the plants we bring into the house during the Holiday season. I like to console myself with the thought that something done is better than none at all!

Poinsettia Care

What to do and not do with *Euphorbia pulcherrima*.

- Do place the plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day. If you must place it where there is direct sun, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain.
- Do provide room temperatures between 68-70 degrees F.
- Do water the plant when the soil feels dry to the touch.
- Do use a large and roomy shopping bag to protect the plant when taking it out of the store and into the vehicle. Do not expose the plant to chilling winds when transporting.
- Do fertilize the Poinsettia AFTER the blooming season with a balanced, all-purpose fertilizer.

- Do not fertilize the Poinsettia when it is in bloom.
- Do not place the plant near cold drafts or excessive heat. Thus, avoid placing the plant near appliances, fireplaces, or ventilating ducts.
- Do not expose the Poinsettia plants to temperatures below 50 degrees F. These plants are sensitive to cold, so do not place them outside during the winter months.
- Do not over water the plant, or allow it to sit in standing water. Remove the plant from the decorative container before watering, and allow the water to drain completely.

Care of Norfolk Island Pine

Araucaria excelsa (or *heterophylla*) is native to Norfolk Island, near Australia. Thus, it is too tender to plant outdoors in our climate. They may become nice houseplants when given proper care. This type of pine needs 50 percent relative humidity. During the winter season the average humidity inside the house may drop to 15 percent because of artificial heating. Find a way to increase moisture in the air around the plant, avoid placing near sources of heat and forced air.

Norfolk pine will adapt to bright indirect light and will look at its best when allowed to receive a couple of hours of direct sunlight daily. If the source of light is coming from just one direction, remember to rotate the plant a quarter turn weekly to prevent it from growing lopsided.

Water this pine when the top inch or so of the soil in the pot feels dry. Use enough water to allow a little excess to escape through the bottom drainage holes. The plant may be in a period of rest during the winter months, but when it begins active growth, feed it with a fertilizer formulated for indoor foliage plants.