

We do this without a thought for the work that went into producing it.

If you knew the horticultural skills that played a part in getting the plant ready for December you'd wonder how they do it for the price.

Photoperiodism

The changes in the seasons, the different durations of day and night induce many plants to flower.

The poinsettia is what's called a "short day plant" — it only flowers when the length of light is less than a critical period.

This induction or production of flowers in response to day and night length is called photoperiodism.

The flowers are quite small and are arranged in small groups — the bright red you see on the plant isn't part of the flower at all, it's the coloured leaves. These coloured leaves, called bracts, are more efficient than petals but do the same job.

The red attracts the pollinator.

Even the slightest flash of light will interrupt the dark cycle and make the whole job useless. The long nights cue flowering. During November, the flowers and coloured leaves develop and within a few weeks the plants are just right for Christmas.

Care

It's not unusual for people to throw it away when the display is over.

It doesn't like cool and cold weather and will drop leaves when the temperature isn't right.

If you can keep this plant in a warm spot and give it a prune when it gets spindly then there's no reason why you can't enjoy it for years.

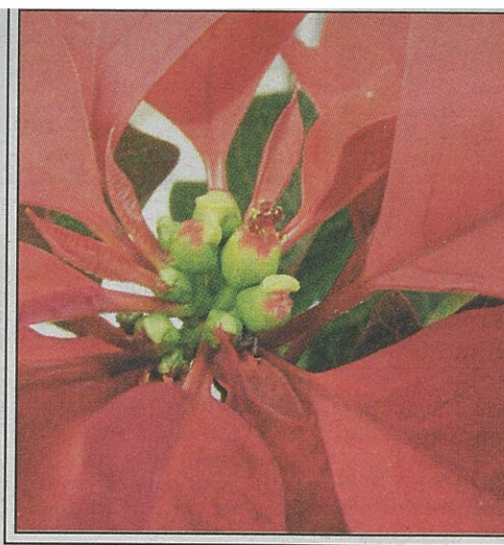
The poinsettia doesn't get itself into flower for our southern hemisphere Christmas, nursery workers with sophisticated facilities do. For all the time and expertise to get this plant to the nurseries for Christmas the price charged is very low.

Merry Christmas from the staff at Horticulture Wodonga TAFE.

“
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Water Land & Food
HORTICULTURE



The flowers are quite insignificant, they're overshadowed by the vivid red-coloured leaves.

Botanic Gardens has been compiled for the launch of the Florilegium in November next year. The gardens are continuing to look for personal anecdotes and photographs of the Botanic Gardens.

Cinema Under the Stars will happen in the gardens again this coming Australia Day weekend. Watch for details in the press and on council's website.

To have your event listed here, email Deb Delahunty at ddelahunty@wodongatafe.edu.au

LIVING LIGHTLY

Unwrap real meaning of the season

I LIKE the sense of expectation in the lead-up to Christmas as we wind down the year.

I enjoy the community spirit of this time as we let our hair down at work functions, embrace the joy of the season at carols and prepare for the festive feast at the farmers' market.

I love reconnecting with family and sharing the unrestrained joy of children on Christmas morning, along with Christmas lunch, that communal meal my family prepares and shares as an expression of how much we care for one another.

These festivities honour the anniversary of the birth 2000 years ago of an extraordinary man who changed the world.

But today the wonderful aspects of the festive season are becoming overshadowed by the deeply disturbing social and cultural pressure placed on us to consume without restraint at Christmas time.

The good things — the love, joy and reconnection with family — are tempered by the expectation of spending bucketloads of money in the rampant consumerist orgy that the festive season has become.

For me, the joy of giving to others has become outweighed by resentment at going into debt to fulfil obligation to buy gifts.

There is no joy in expressing hollow thanks for the mountain of mostly unwanted junk that arrives under the tree as Christmas gifts, whose sole purpose in the New Year



will be to take up storage space. I lament the pointlessness of wrapping paper and cards, which cover presents under the tree for a few days before arriving at their final destination in the recycling bin.

And I wonder about the electricity bills people rack up in neighbourhood contests to see who can give their house with the thickest coating of LED lights.

Why don't we consider the "real" cost of our gifts, in

terms of the resource, energy, water and labour inputs of their production and the pollution generated?

I often wonder if this is what Jesus would have had in mind as a fitting testament to his life's work.

We could do greater honour to those teachings by celebrating Christmas lightly, by moving away from the crass consumerist perversion of Christmas to embrace the connection with family that makes Christmas so special.

— Ben Habib
WATCH (Wodonga Albury
Towards Climate Health)