

Give blooming plants as holiday gifts

Winter-blooming indoor plants are a welcome way to take the edge off the chill and gloom of winter and many are ready to give as holiday gifts.

The choices go beyond traditional poinsettias and amaryllis. Colorful African violets, gloxinia, cyclamen, orchids, ornamental peppers and Christmas cactus are blooming and readily available. Dress them up with bows and cellophane or combine a few in a basket with store-bought or garden-harvested moss and some decorations and present them as party gifts or to a plant lover on your list.

Before you buy, though, consider some key care tips, including how to get them home, said Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with Oregon State University Extension Service. She advises taking a cardboard box along with you to the store and then covering the plant after getting it into the car.

“You want to keep them protected from drafts and mimic the conditions of being in a warm situation,” she said. “Use something that won’t crush the plant but protects it against cold shock. Avoid putting them in the trunk where it gets colder.”

Once you get them home, check to see if they are badly rootbound and need to be



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repotted up one container size. If so, be sure to use a well-draining potting soil with perlite or peat moss in the mix. If the plant comes wrapped in foil or cellophane, be sure to cut holes in the bottom so water drains through. Most plants will rot if left sitting in water, Edmunds said.

Potted plants are well fertilized before being shipped to stores, so let the recipient know they don’t have to worry about feeding them for several weeks. When it’s time, use a houseplant fertilizer high in phosphorous (the middle number on the label), the element that helps them bloom.

“When it comes to watering, more people overwater than underwater,” Edmunds said. “Check to see if the plant needs water by sticking your finger two inches into the soil. If it’s dry, go ahead and water.”

The foliage of some plants, such as African violets, can be damaged if water gets on the leaves. They also get root rot easily. Avoid that by watering from below. Or carefully water



PHOTO: <https://flic.kr/p/7mG9JT>
A Christmas cactus makes a wonderful blooming gift.

from above, let it drain and then empty the saucer it sits in. Also, steer clear of misting, which can promote foliar disease.

Keep plants away from drafts, in bright light and in temperatures of 70 degrees or above during the day and 55 or above at night.

“It’s a nice idea to write down instructions on a pretty card to include with the plant,” Edmunds suggested.

Don’t be concerned if gloxinia or cyclamen die down after blooming. That’s normal. You can either discard the plant and buy a new one next year or let it go

dormant for a few months until foliage reappears. Then grow it like you would any houseplant.

Look for plants — particularly orchids and Christmas cactus — that have some tight buds as well as open flowers in order to extend bloom. Orchids can be difficult to rebloom unless you have a greenhouse or can mimic the warm, moist conditions.

Colorful ornamental peppers may look delicious, but are often extremely hot, so keep them off your taste buds and up where kids and pets can’t access them.

MI TOWN

Happy December, everyone. It seems like we just put away our summertime chairs and picnic baskets, and now it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas in MI Town — and all over the valley.

We celebrated Monmouth Senior Center Director Sue Teal’s retirement last week with a somewhat bittersweet reception and party at the center. Sue was one of the first people I met when we moved to Monmouth nearly 18 years ago, and her warm and caring welcome was so genuine. Over the years, we’ve seen the center just get better and better, which is so positive for all of us in MI Town. Godspeed and best wishes ever for Sue as she begins yet another fun and interesting journey into doing everything she wants to do.

The Monmouth Public Library is collecting donations to share with CASA



PATTY
TAYLOR
DUTCHER
Columnist

(Court Appointed Special Advocates) children in Polk County. Please check their website to see what you can bring to help our local children. This is a wonderful organization whose dedicated and caring volunteers go above and beyond doing good things for children and families. The deadline for helping is Dec. 20. Thank you so much.

Continuing with my Journey to Wellness: One of the Rules Before Surgery is to shower with Hibiclens (\$10 for a very small bottle), then be sure the bed linens are fresh and clean the night before. After dinner, it’s cleansing shower, and I am

to pay special attention to my navel and the area where the surgery will happen. Big surprise here, folks: The soap turns a very bright red and the shower floor looks like somebody has been seriously injured, or whatever else would fit a Stephen King novel. I have the cleanest belly button in all of Polk County as I dry off (with a fresh clean towel), climb into my fresh clean pajamas and into the cleaner than clean bedcovers.

After yet another cleansing shower in the predawn darkness, we’re off to Corvallis at 6:45 a.m., and checked in just before I’m bundled off to ultrasound where I’m “wired” so the nasty rotten cancerous intruder is marked. Yet another X-ray and a warm blanket before I’m off to nuclear medicine where all kinds of things are beamed at me for the surgeon to learn more about the inner workings.

I’m very good at this deflecting stuff, although it’s beginning to dawn on me that something not wonderful is about to happen.

The anesthesiologist, very bright and friendly woman, comes into my “room,” explains the upcoming procedure. It’s starting to get really, serious about now. I’m given a wonderful potion which takes all the scary things away.

As I slide from gurney to operating table, my mind just wanders off to some quiet place and everything goes from blue to gray to. I awaken in the recovery room, where a nice RN guy asks if I want a sip of water, and I take small sips that taste better than the finest wine ever. And I sleep, and drink more water, and am transported off to my little room where Don is waiting for me. The promise of going home is a sweet one, indeed.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These Polk County groups would welcome individuals who have time or expertise to volunteer. Organizations that would like to be added to this list should call 503-623-2373 or email 10news@polkio.com.

- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide — 503-930-7636
- After DARC — 503-623-9501
- American Cancer Society Road to Recovery — 1-800-227-2345
- Arc of Polk County — 541-223-3261
- Ash Creek Arts Center — 971-599-3301
- Central School District — 503-838-0030
- City of Dallas — 503-831-3502
- City of Independence — 503-838-1212
- City of Monmouth — 503-751-0145
- Crime Victims Assistance Program — 503-623-9268
- Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce — 503-623-2564
- Dallas Downtown Association — 971-701-1880
- Dallas Emergency Food Bank — 503-623-3578
- Dallas Fire Department — 503-831-3532
- Dallas Food Bank — 503-623-3578
- Dallas Kids, Inc. — 503-623-6419
- Dallas Police Department — 503-831-3582
- Dallas Public Library — 503-623-2633
- Dallas Retirement Village — 503-623-5581
- Dallas Riders for Christ — 503-949-6019
- Dallas School District — 503-623-5594
- Delbert Hunter Arboretum — 503-623-7359
- Ella Curran Food Bank — 503-838-1276
- Falls City Arts Center — 503-559-6291
- Falls City School District — 503-787-3531
- Family Building Blocks — 503-566-2132, ext. 308.
- Friends of the Dallas Library — 503-559-3830
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Washington and Oregon — 1-800-338-5248
- H-2-O — 503-831-4736 HART (Horses Adaptive Riding and Therapy) — 971-301-4278
- HandsOn Mid-Willamette Valley — 503-363-1651
- Heron Pointe Assisted Living — 503-838-6850
- Independence Health and Rehabilitation — 503-838-0001
- Independence Public Library — 503-838-1811
- Kings Valley Charter School — 541-929-2134
- Luckiamute Watershed Council — 503-837-0237
- Luckiamute Valley Charter School — 503-623-4837
- Meals on Wheels — 503-838-2084
- Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce — 503-838-4268
- Monmouth-Independence YMCA — 503-838-4042
- Monmouth Public Library — 503-838-1932
- Northwest Human Services — 503-588-5828
- Oregon Child Development Coalition — 503-838-2745
- OSU Extension Service - Polk County — 503-623-8395
- Perrydale School District — 503-623-2040
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Polk County Inc. — 503-623-8473
- Polk Community Development Corporation — 503-831-3173
- Polk County Community Emergency Response Team — 503-623-9396
- Polk County Museum — 503-623-6251
- Polk County Public Health — 503-623-8175
- Polk County Resource Center — 503-623-8429
- Polk Soil and Water Conservation District — 503-623-9680
- Relief Nursery Classroom — 503-566-2132
- SABLE House — 503-623-6703
- SALT (Sheriff’s Auxiliary & Law Enforcement Together) — 503-851-9366
- Salvation Army — 503-798-4783
- SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) — 503-391-8423
- Salem Health West Valley Hospital — 503-623-8301
- Victim Assistance Program-Polk Co. District Attorney’s Office — 503-623-9268 x1444
- Willamette Valley Hospice — 503-588-3600
- WIMPEG Community Access Television — 503-837-0163

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 8A

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 13

- **Polk County Republican Women** — 11:30 a.m., Murphy’s Restaurant, 288 E. Ellendale Ave., Dallas. No-host lunch available; everyone welcome. 503-623-5759. (NO June, July, August).
- **Respite care** — 1 to 3 p.m., 182 SW Academy St., Suite 216, Dallas. Free child care for parents who need time to run errands, pay bills, etc. Free. Open for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. 503-877-8473 to reserve space. Diapers are provided.
- **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program Food Bank** — 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., 888 Monmouth Cutoff Road, Building E, Dallas. Weekly distribution for eligible community members. 503-831-5634.
- **Free Blood Pressure Check Clinic** — 2 to 3 p.m., Salem Health West Valley (surgery admitting area), 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. 503-623-7323.
- **Monmouth Senior Center Music Jam** — 6:30 p.m., Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St., Monmouth. Open to the public; musicians of all types welcome. 503-838-5678.
- **Dallas American Legion Post No. 20** — 7 p.m., Academy Building, Room 108, 182 SW Academy St., Dallas. 503-831-3971.
- **Pickleball** — 9 a.m. to noon, Roger Jordan Community Park. Meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon. Karen Freeman, 503-871-4172.
- **Brew and BS: The New Testament** — 7 p.m., St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 1486 SW Levens St., Dallas. A lecture series on New Testament figures. Bring brew of choice — coffee, tea, chai, beer, wine, cider. 435-503-4304.

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