



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

National Poinsettia Day – Dec 12th

HOW DID “POINSETTIA” ORIGINATE?

The ancient Aztecs called this plant: *cuetlaxochitl*, which flourished in the tropical highlands of Taxco del Alarcon in Southern Mexico. During the 14th – 16th century the sap (latex) was used to control fevers and the bracts were used to make a dye.

The “*poinsettia*” may have remained a regional plant had it not been for the efforts of Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779 - 1851), who was appointed as the first United States Ambassador to Mexico in 1825. While visiting the Taxco area in 1828, he became enchanted by the brilliant red blooms and immediately sent some of the plants back to Greenville, South Carolina, where he later began propagating the plants and sending them to friends and botanical gardens.

The German botanist, Wilenow, was so dazzled by the bright color of a plant that grew through a crack in his greenhouse, he named it *Euphorbia Pulcherrima* meaning "the most beautiful Euphorbia."

As the *Euphorbia Pulcherrima* became more popular, William Prescott, a historian and horticulturist, was asked to give the plant a new name. At that time (circa 1836) Mr. Prescott had just published a book called the Conquest of Mexico in which he detailed Joel Poinsett's discovery of the plant. As a result, Prescott felt it was appropriate to name the plant the “*poinsettia*.”

Zen: A poinsettia is unique – a Christmas gift that keeps giving