



Worldwide Newsletter / 21

Red, green and gold

Welcome to our December newsletter, which has an appropriately seasonal colourful theme.

Red is the colour of the world's most popular seasonal plant, the poinsettia - a species that seems to invoke a sense of delight and dread in equal measure. 'Green buildings' are becoming an increasingly important feature of the urban landscape and we are promoting the value of plants in such places - read more about our involvement at the recent Greenbuild expo on page 2. Finally, gold is the colour of the awards won by some of our service staff at a recent ceremony in the UK - read more on page 3.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and we wish all of our readers the compliments of the season and a happy, prosperous 2007.

Poinsettias - truth and myths

This is the season that brings joy to poinsettia growers and a feeling of deep trepidation for our staff. As a company, we buy, install and maintain millions of these brightly coloured plants every year. There is a belief that poinsettias are fragile, delicate plants that fail within a few days of installation and need extra-special care. This is far from the truth as long as few common-sense procedures are adopted.

Poinsettias are members of the Euphorbia family and originate in Central America and southern Mexico. This gives a clue to their requirements - stable warmth and moisture typical of the tropics. As with all euphorbias, the species exudes a milky sap when wounded, which some people find irritating if it gets in contact with the skin. However, contrary to popular myth, the species is not considered poisonous (although you shouldn't try to eat it).

The scientific name of the poinsettia is *Euphorbia pulcherrima* which literally means 'the most beautiful of euphorbias'. The common English name is in honour of Joel Roberts Poinsett, son of a French physician and botanist, who was appointed the first American ambassador to Mexico.

The Aztecs, who named the plant *cuetlaxochitl* (literally 'excrement flower' as the seed was believed to germinate from bird droppings after having been eaten), used the species as a source for dyes and as a treatment against fever.

For a seasonal cocktail a 'Poinsettia' can be made from sparkling white wine, vodka and cranberry juice.

Poinsettia care - some advice from our experts.

- Keep the soil evenly moist - do not allow the soil to dry out, but also don't let the plants stand in water. Soil improvers or irrigation systems may be beneficial.
- Poinsettias do best in warm, draught-free locations: do not allow them to get chilled or stand them near a door or open window.
- Pink and white coloured varieties often maintain their appearance longer than red types.
- If your poinsettias look a little wilted, try soaking the rootball in warm water for an hour - you may be surprised at how well the plant will recover
- Red poinsettias look best under halogen or incandescent lighting - fluorescent lights may make them appear a little dull.
- Choose your supplier carefully. Pick someone with a good reputation and consistent quality. Cheap plants may be a false economy.



Going green in Denver

For two days in the middle of November, Initial Tropical Plants USA exhibited at the world's largest exhibition of sustainable architecture and construction: Greenbuild 2006. We posed a question to visitors and organizers alike: can a building be truly green without interior plants?

More than 12,000 visitors attended the two-day expo in the American city of Denver and it is safe to say that a fair-sized proportion visited Initial Tropical Plants' booth. Architects, building engineers, facilities managers and other top specifiers with an interest in environmentally-responsible building construction and management wanted to know how interior plants could be an integral part of a modern, green building.

As well as specifiers, we spoke to senior representatives of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) and other influential people in the green building movement. We hope to be able to persuade them that interior landscaping should become a recognised way of gaining credits in the various rating schemes operated by the USGBC.

Whilst visitors to Greenbuild learned how interior plants help to improve the interior environment, they also got a chance to see just how good interior landscaping can look - the Colorado Convention Center was fitted out by the local branch of Initial Tropical Plants.

Initial Tropical Plants USA is a member of the USGBC and was a Gold level sponsor of Greenbuild 2006. The company has already reserved a space at Greenbuild 2007, to be held in Los Angeles next October and has been selected to provide the interior plant displays at the USGBC's new corporate offices in Washington DC - a building that is being designed to achieve "Platinum" status in the USGBC's own green building rating system.



Really green interior landscaping

Rentokil Initial Tropical Plants can provide plant displays that not only benefit the indoor environment, but are designed and maintained with sustainability in mind. In particular, we can...

- Use containers that are made from recycled and recyclable materials.
- Employ water-efficient subterranean irrigation and specify plants with a low water requirement.
- Use systems to source and transport our plants and materials that minimize the number of fuel miles.
- Set up plant displays with the minimum necessary amount of non-recyclable and non-natural materials.
- Maintain plants with the minimum necessary inputs of fertilizer and other artificial additives.
- Keep interior plants clean and green without the need for chemical pesticides.



Ken Brewer and Daria Snyder at the Initial Tropical Plants booth in Denver.



Swedish architects dare to create the future

On 18th October, 60 architects, designers and trend setters converged on the top floor of the Turning Torso in Malmö - Sweden's newest, most daring and tallest building - to learn how interior landscapers can help to create a more daring future for the working environment.

Lars Svanberg of Rentokil Tropical Plants Sweden opened the event, named "Dare to Create the Future" and explained how we wanted to create interest and provide inspiration to the architectural and design community in Sweden. As well as a showcase of Rentokil Tropical Plants' products and services, a programme of lectures and seminars was arranged covering subjects as diverse as the 'Plants in buildings' web site to Feng Shui.

Many architects are wary of using interior landscaping in their buildings, believing it to be too complex for them to consider, old-fashioned or expensive. These beliefs and prejudices were changed during the lectures and in less formal meetings over lunch or coffee, and the participants departed with a much greater understanding of the benefits of interior landscaping. More importantly, many made the commitment to use interior plants in their buildings and several new business relationships were forged.

More information on the Turning Torso building can be found on www.turningtorso.com. "Dare to Create the Future" was sponsored by Clarke and Spears International, Nieuwkoop de Kwakel, Clarius and LeasePlan.



Awards for Rentokil Tropical Plants UK

Two Rentokil Tropical Plants service technicians in Scotland were the proud recipients of Gold awards at the recent European Federation of Interior Landscape Groups awards ceremony held in Stoneleigh, England in early November.

Linda Baxter was recognised for her excellent service skills at the offices of Esure in Glasgow and Jeanie Clark for her equally impressive green fingers in looking after the plant displays at the Pentagon Business Centre, also in Glasgow. Linda and Jeanie are pictured here at the awards ceremony, together with their local supervisor, Maggie Torrance. Rentokil Tropical Plants UK also won Silver awards for the maintenance of plant displays at the offices of the National Westminster Bank and Cardif Pinnacle insurance company, both in Hertfordshire and Jewson's head office in Coventry. Bronze awards were given for the maintenance of plant displays at the Friars Square Shopping Centre in Aylesbury, the offices of DLA Piper in London and Friends Provident, also in London. Congratulations to all involved in these schemes.





Interiorscape photography

We can all agree that a picture is worth a thousand words and a good collection of pictures is an essential part of the sales and design toolkit.

Rentokil Initial Tropical Plants has a collection of hundreds of photographs of stunning interior landscapes that we have designed, installed or maintained around the world. Many good examples can be found in the gallery pages of www.plants-in-buildings.com and our various company web sites and brochures. We always like to keep our library of images up-to-date so that we have a record of our best installations, which we can use to inspire our customers and designers.

As well as pictures taken by professional photographers, we often use those taken by our own colleagues, and we are often impressed at the quality of those pictures - can you tell which of these was taken by a professional and which by the person who looks after the plants? (answer at the bottom of this story)



Naturally, we must gain permission from our customers before using any pictures taken on their premises, so it is important that a photography release form is completed and signed by a customer before any photographs are taken. New forms, in 9 languages, have been produced and will be sent to each of our businesses for use when taking photographs of any plant display.

Who took the pictures? Left: Matrix House, taken by RTP UK service technician J Powell. Right: County Mall Shopping Centre, taken by a professional photographer, Mr David Cropp.

How to take good interior landscape photographs.

- Set your camera to take pictures at the highest possible resolution and image quality.
- Think about reflections. Will you and your camera appear in the picture of you are facing a window or mirror?
- Think more about reflections. If you are facing a shiny surface, such as glass or metal, you will get a reflection of your flash.
- Try and get a sense of the atmosphere of the building. Don't just take a picture of the plant in its pot, try and include some furniture or architectural feature.
- Look out for the little things that might spoil a picture. You might not notice the shopping bag or brief case that has been left leaning against the plant container, but everyone else will.
- Beware of shadows. Will you or your colleague find their shadow cast across the horticultural masterpiece that you tried so hard to capture?

Contributions Please!

Contributions are welcome from our readers around the world. If you don't have time to write at length, send us brief notes or telephone us and we'll prepare an article for you.

Remember, if you want a swift reply to a tricky technical question, send an e-mail to the editor and we will do our best to answer it.

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