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## Have a bloomin' good Christmas

**T**HE POINSETTIA may be the first flowering plant you think of as the holidays approach, but it's by no means your only choice. A wide variety of flowering plants can add beauty to your holiday decor.

If your house or apartment is fairly cool — between 60 and 70 degrees during the day and cooler at night — Michigan State University Extension horticulturists recommend Kalanchoe (kal-un-CO-ee), Christmas cactus, amaryllis, azalea, Rieger begonia and cyclamen.

Kalanchoe is a succulent plant that produces clusters of small, trumpet-shaped flowers in shades of yellow, orange, pink and red. It needs bright light and water only when the soil begins to dry out.

Christmas cacti bear exotic-looking blossoms in white, pink, coral and red at the ends of slightly pendulous, segmented stems. Overwatering causes premature flower drop, so water only when the soil surface feels dry.

The amaryllis is a large bulb that produces large — up to dinner plate-sized — lily-shaped flowers on a tall stem. Strap shaped leaves appear after flower-

ing. The bulbs are usually available potted and ready to grow, all you add is water. Colors range from white through pink and red.

AZALEAS ARE shrubby plants with glossy, dark green leaves. They bear a profusion of blossoms in a wide range of solid colors and variegations. They do best in acid soil, bright light and cool temperatures. Like amaryllis bulbs, they can be planted outdoors in the summer, then brought in before frost.

Rieger begonias flower more or less continuously indoors. Their flowers resemble those of begonias except in size — Rieger begonia blossoms are about twice as large. After some months of flowerings indoors, they may need their long stems cut back. New growth will emerge soon and flowering begin again after three or four months.

To keep cyclamen flowering, give it cool temperatures, especially at night, and plenty of bright light. Water carefully to avoid splashing water onto the foliage or into the crown of the plant — this makes the plant very susceptible to rot. After flowering, cyclamen requires a rest period. Reduce the amount and frequen-

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