

Yes, searing the cut ends of poinsettia stems can help them last longer in an arrangement. A brief dip in very hot water seals the milky sap at the cut end and helps the stem take up water.

Why the cut ends need attention

Poinsettia stems release a milky white sap as soon as they are cut. Sealing the ends promptly helps keep that sap from leaking into the vase water and allows the stems to draw up the water they need.

The colorful parts of a poinsettia are modified leaves called bracts. The small flowers sit at their center. Both can make a lovely addition to a vase, but the cut stems need a little preparation before you arrange them.

Freshly cut stems are easiest to handle one at a time. Have your hot water and vase ready before you begin, so each stem can be sealed and placed in water without a long wait.

How to sear poinsettia stems

Hot water is a simple alternative to holding the stem over a flame. You only need to treat the bottom of the stem, not the leaves or colorful bracts.

- Fill a heatproof container with freshly boiled water. Keep it on a stable surface away from children and pets.
- Cut a stem with clean, sharp scissors or pruning shears. Choose a length that will suit your vase.
- Dip the cut end in the hot water for about 20 seconds. Keep the rest of the stem and foliage clear of the water.
- Transfer the stem to a vase of fresh water. Repeat with the remaining stems.

Handle the hot water carefully and let it cool before discarding it. The sap can irritate skin, so wear gloves if you have sensitive skin and wash off any sap that gets on your hands. Keep the cut stems and sap away from children and pets.

Keeping the arrangement fresh

Use a clean vase and remove any leaves that would sit below the waterline. Leaves left in water can decay and make the water cloudy. Arrange the poinsettias gently, giving the bracts room rather than pressing them tightly against other stems.

Check the water level each day and add fresh water as needed. Change the water if it becomes cloudy, and rinse the vase before putting the stems back. Place the arrangement somewhere cool, away from direct sun, heaters and drafts.

If you need to shorten a stem later, treat the newly cut end with hot water before returning it to the vase. A fresh cut can release sap again, even if the original end was sealed.

A little preparation at the start gives cut poinsettias a better chance of staying bright and firm, leaving you free to enjoy their color indoors.

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