

Poinsettia is the true star

By Christmas Day, 100,000 poinsettias, with their distinctive red leaves, grown at Keysborough's Karinga Nursery will have been sold to add festive cheer to homes around Australia.

Karinga has been selling plants wholesale from Keysborough for more than 40 years and tricking poinsettias to flower in late spring for 30 of those.

According to owner Roy Schirmer, the plants, which grows naturally in sub-tropical areas and usually flower in winter, arrive at Karinga in late July or early August.

They are placed under artificial light and the hours of light are gradually wound back as December approaches.

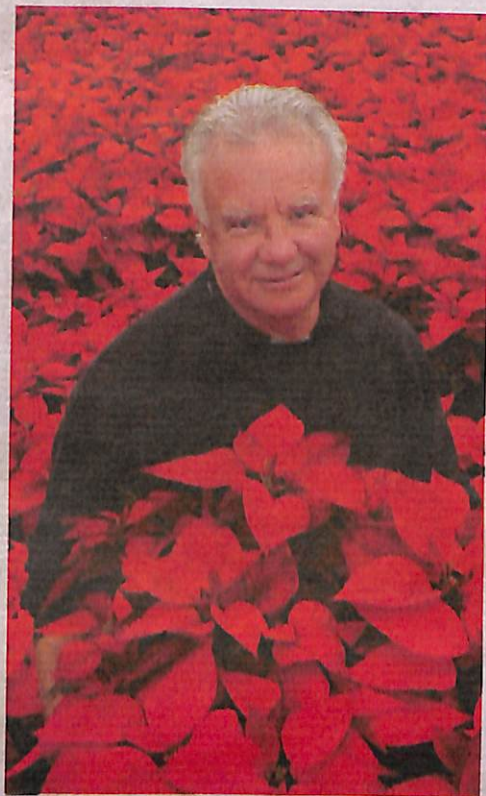
"The plants think the days are getting shorter so they flower," explained Roy.

Poinsettias last for three or four months in a well-lit position and will grow in a garden bed with a northerly aspect.

For those who are given a poinsettia for Christmas, Roy advises removing the plastic wrap and watering it a couple of times a week. Be careful not to over water.

The plant's association with Christmas began in 16th-century Mexico.

The star-shaped leaf pattern is said to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem, and the red colour represents the blood sacrifice through the crucifixion of Jesus.



Roy. 131245