A traditional part of the holidays

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AFTOS — Like variable lights and the Christmas tree, the poinsettia is a traditional part of the holiday season, and on Wednesday, locals can get their hands on healthy, vibrant poinsettia cultures at the annual Poinsettia Open House and Sale at Cabrillo College’s Horticulture Department.

More than 900 plants and 14 varieties, including Strato Bright Red, Premium Red, Cheese Cake, the mini Jingle Bell and the yellow tinted Premium Martha, will be on offer, with plants available in 4-inch and 6-inch size pots.

Plants were sourced from Sonoma California and grown from plugs at Cabrillo College by a student assistant in the department, a tradition that gives students an opportunity to manage the plants’ entire growth process.

This year, the poinsettias were grown by student assistant Andrea Yates, who transplanted the plants since they arrived at the campus greenhouses in the beginning of August. The poinsettias, which do not like drought and prefer a warm and stable climate, are best to be compacted and hydromineralized to bring out different traits, explained Yates during a tour of the greenhouse on Monday.

Tended with transplanting, irrigating and trimming the plants throughout the growing cycle, Yates said poinsettias require “long days and short nights” to develop the colorful bracts (poinsettia leaves) that people love. In their native Mexico, poinsettias can grow up to 10 feet tall in the wild and are referred to as “La Flor de Nochebuena” or The Flower of Good Holy Night.

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Andrew Wall, garden and nursery curator, views the different varieties of poinsettias that will be for sale to the public Wednesday.

Andrew Wall, the Garden and Nursery curator at Cabrillo College’s Horticulture Department, said with proper care, potted poinsettias can last for months.

Wall recommends plants be kept indoors and away from draft. Poinsettias should not be overwatered and be kept a bit on the dry side.

The Cabrillo College Horticulture Department Open House Poinsettia Sale is on Wednesday from 3-6 p.m., at the Cabrillo College Horticulture Department Greenhouses.

These small Jingle Bell poinsettias will be for sale.