# for the

November 2018 A Special Supplement to Oneida Daily Dispatch

It's a Wrap! Gift-wrapping tips and tricks

> **Crafty Christmas** Homemade or nament ideas

**Recipes for** Perfect Holiday Meals

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# Omeida Daily Dispatch

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# Dos and don'ts of holiday safety

t's the most wonderful time of the year, as long as holiday happenings go as planned. Celebrants can ensure that this joyous time of year is not marred by injury, theft or accidents by always keeping safety in mind.

**DO** turn off Christmas lights before going to bed or leaving home. Lights left on can overheat and cause fires. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in two of every five home Christmas tree fires between 2011 and 2015, according to the National Fire Prevention Association.

**DON'T** locate a Christmas tree too close to a heating source, fireplace or lit candles, as trees can dry out and ignite.

**DO** extinguish candles before retiring for the night.

**DON'T** gift without doing research into whether or not toys are age-appropriate. Pay attention to toy recalls as well. The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides lists of recalled items.

**DO** roast rather than fry the holiday turkey. Burns, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning are some of the dangers associated with turkey fryers. The CPSC, which discourages the use of fryers, says there have been 168 turkeyfryer related incidents since 2002.

**DON'T** keep purchases in view of potential thieves. Resist putting presents

under the tree until the night before Christmas. Hide large product boxes so they're not visible in the trash or recyclir pickups, where thieves might look to see what's inside the house.

**DO** wait until after your holiday excursion to take to social media about it. Otherwise, you're simply advertising that you are not home and risking a break-in

**DON'T** drive distracted or under the influence. This is a busy time of year when more people are out and about, s keep your eyes on the road at all times.

**DO** keep poisonous plants out of reach of pets and children. These can include Jerusalem cherry, mistletoe berries and holly berries.

**DON'T** locate breakable ornaments close to the bottom of the tree in reach of young children. Glass can shatter and cause serious injuries.

**DO** tie the Christmas tree to the car securely after purchasing it to avoid liftoff while taking it home from the lot. At home, secure the tree to the ceiling or a wall with a piece of invisible fishing line for extra security against tip overs.

**DON'T** underestimate the things that ca and will go wrong when hosting for the holidays. Take a deep breath, assess the situation and stay calm through any biccups.

# Get Christmas crafty with homemade ornaments

andmade gifts, trinkets and treats help make the holiday season special. Although cookies and other baked goods are some of the most popular homemade creations this time of year, gift-givers young and old can put their talents to use with various craft projects. Ornaments and decorations are one such idea. Here are some clever and, not-too-time-consuming craft projects to try this holiday season.

Mini sleighs: Create miniature replicas of Santa's famous sleigh. Paint several popsicle sticks to form the main body of the sleigh and glue them together. Put one at the top perpendicular to the others to serve as the steering rudder. Two silver-painted popsicle sticks placed on their thin sides act as the blades of a sled.

**Popcorn garland:** Garland made of popcorn is a classic handmade holiday project. For a new twist, toss the

popcorn with food coloring and allow it to dry before stringing for some bright color on the tree.

Photo ornaments: Print out several different photos that you love. Purchase round or square thin wood pieces from a craft store and attach the photos with Mod Podge®. When dry, drill a hole through the top and thread with twine.

Advent calendar: Make an Advent calendar to count down to Christmas by covering a foam board with fabric. Use paper tags or small ornaments and write a number on each for each day of the month. Hang these all from the board. As each day passes, move the tag or ornament to the tree.

Wooden snowflakes: Have children collect small twigs from outdoors, as well as holly leaves and some sprigs of evergreen. Arrange similarly sized twigs in the shape of snowflakes and glue together, or tie with twine. Embellish with stickers, glitter, dried berries, and more.

**Dough ornaments:** Anyone can have fun molding their own ornaments, letting them dry and then painting them. Use cookie cutters to get perfect holiday shapes. Craft stores sell various types of modeling clays and lightweight modeling materials. Or, make your own salt dough.

**Reindeer bottle topper:** Put to use any wine corks you have lying around. Attach googly eyes and a small fuzzy nose to the front of a cork. Insert twisted, brown pipe cleaners to make the antlers up top. Add ribbons, small snippets of faux fur or any other extras you desire.

Sweet sentiments: Use old Scrabble® letter tiles to form a favorite holiday phrase, like "Joy to the World." Glue the tiles together and hang from the tree on a piece of ribbon.









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# Great gifts for holiday hosts



for anything in return. But guests who want

to show their appreciation to their gracious

hosts can consider these gift ideas this

Decorative vase: The holiday season is

colorful, and many people deck their halls

with poinsettias or other plants and flowers

during this time of year. A decorative

Wine rack: Wine makes a perfect

holiday vase is a thoughtful gift that can

be part of hosts' holiday decor for years to

complement to holiday meals, and hosts

might appreciate a place to store their

collections. Guests unfamiliar with the

layout of their hosts' homes may want

to choose a countertop wine rack, which

won't take up much space and can be a convenient place to store a bottle or two

before dinner. Guests who want to go the

of wine so the wine rack is presented fully

A night out: While it might not be a gift in

the traditional sense, paying for a night out

is a great way to show hosts you recognize

extra mile can bring along a few bottles

holiday season.

come.

stocked.

and appreciate all of their hard work. Call your host in advance of your visit and insist on taking everyone out to dinner one night during your stay, even splitting the tab with other guests if a lot of people will be staying overnight.

Holiday photo frame or album: Men and women like to host family during the holidays because it's a great chance to make lasting memories and reconnect with loved ones. Help hosts commemorate those memories by giving them a photo frame in which they can place a picture of the whole family, or an album where they can place various photos of the family from this holiday season.

**Spa day:** Of course, gifts for holiday hosts need not tie in to hosting. A certificate for a day at a local spa can be just what exhausted hosts need to refresh once all of their guests have come and gone. If a day at the spa is beyond your budget, put together a home spa package with bubble bath, scented candles and a bottle of wine. Holiday hosts deserve a little extra for inviting family and friends into their homes during this joyous time of year.

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# Try a different take on turkey this holiday season



urkey is a holiday dinner staple in many families. While many might scoff at the idea of altering their holidav turkev traditions. others may embrace changing things up, feeling that the joy of cooking often lies in experimentation. Those unafraid to try something new might want to cook up the following recipe for "Turkey Roulade with Cranberry Chutney" from Laurey Masterton's "The Fresh Honey Cookbook" (Storey).

### Turkey Roulade with Cranberry Chutney Serves 6

- 1 sheet puff pastry
- pound turkey meat from turkey breast and/or thigh meat, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 eggs <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cup chicken stock
- 1/4 cup Marsala
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter Unbleached all-purpose flour, for the pastry
- 1/2 cup celery sliced on the diagonal
- 1/2 cup sliced button mushrooms
- 1/2 cup Cranberry Chutney (see below), plus more for serving Fresh parsley sprigs for garnish

1. Following the instructions on the package, thaw the puff pastry. This will take 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the type of pastry. You should be able to unfold it without it breaking. Set aside.

2. Pulse the turkey in a food processor until it is the consistency of ground beef. Add 2 of the eggs, the chicken stock. the Marsala, and the butter. Pulse again briefly, until just combined.

3. Roll out the puff pastry on a floured surface until it is a 12- or 13-inch square. Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper and place the pastry on top.

4. Form the minced turkey mixture into a log and position it down the center of the prepared puff pastry. Make an indentation down the length of the turkey and place the celery, mushrooms, and cranberry chutney along the indentation. Cover the indentation with the meat, forming a log once again.

5. Wrap the puff pastry around the turkey, neatly folding the ends and top together, rolling or tucking the edges together, and pinching to seal any gaps. Make the pastry-covered log as round as possible, like a Yule log - try to avoid a flattened version. like a strudel.

6. Preheat the oven to 450 F.

7. Combine the remaining egg with 1 tablespoon water in a small bowl or cup. Stir well until completely mixed. Brush the roulade with the egg wash, being careful to brush every bit of the exposed pastry.

8. Bake for 10 minutes at 450 F, then reduce the heat to 375 F. Continue to bake for 30 to 45 minutes longer, until the pastry has risen and is a

toasty, golden color and the turkey has reached an internal temperature of 165 F. Generally speaking, once the pastry has cooked, the meat will be cooked. too. Remove the roulade from the oven. Transfer it to a serving platter, using the parchment paper to help you. Allow to rest for about 10 minutes.

9. Slice and serve, garnishing with the parslev and accompanying with a bowl of extra cranberry chutney.

### Cranberry Chutney

Makes 3 cups

- 1 1-pound bag fresh cranberries
- 2 navel oranges, unpeeled, cut into 6 wedges and then into thin slices
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup apple cider
- 1/2 cup honey, preferably cranberry honey
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

1. Pour the cranberries into a 2-quart pot. Add the oranges, raisins, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, salt, apple cider, honey, and vinegar. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat to low and simmer until the chutney thickens, about 20 minutes.

2. Remove from the heat and serve warm or, if you prefer, chill and serve cold.



# Serve up warmth for the holidays

eople often associate holiday imbibing with eggnog, but many other beverages can be enjoyed this time of year. Wassail is a hot, mulled cider that was traditionally consumed while wassailing, a ritual of Medieval English Christmas and Twelfth Night celebrations. A warm beverage and caroling go hand-in-hand.

Wassail can be made in many different ways, depending on one's tastes. But cider is an integral ingredient in most wassail recipes. Home cocktail creators can use this basic recipe and modify as they see fit.

### Wassail

Serves 8 to 10

- 1/2 gallon apple cider
- 2 cups orange juice or pineapple juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 8 whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 cup orange juice Whiskey, if desired

Add all ingredients to a large pot over medium heat. Allow to boil. Reduce and simmer for 30 to 45 minutes. Strain out the cloves and cinnamon sticks. For an alcoholic drink, add whiskey to desired taste.

Wassail is traditionally served out of a communal punch bowl, but can also be presented in individual mugs garnished with cinnamon sticks.

# Norman Rockwell Christmas



ertain holiday images have been ingrained in the minds of the public. Coca-Cola's smiling bearded Santa Claus, in his now universally recognized red coat, helped create a model from which all other Santas evolved. And an early 20th century artist and illustrator helped to establish the feelings of the Christmas season for millions with portraits featured on the covers of The Saturday Evening Post.

Norman Rockwell was born in New York City in 1894 and dreamt of becoming an artist when he was young. Rockwell received his first commission at age 17 and illustrated for Boy's Life, the monthly magazine of the Boy Scouts of America. In 1916, Rockwell was hired by The Saturday Evening Post. When Rockwell began working for the Post, his humorous and dead-pan depictions of American life tugged at the heartstrings of the public — even if they weren't so adored by art critics.

Rockwell spent 47 years working for this iconic magazine. Rockwell produced paintings for the Post and other publications that depicted key images in American history, including Charles Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic, the Moon Landing and World War II. Norman Rockwell helped establish the ideal holiday image and inspired other artists along the way.

However, some of Rockwell's most beloved work pertains to his holiday scenes.

Rockwell used real people as his models, and every detail in his reproduction paintings of photographs was fastidiously planned, say biographers. Over time, Rockwell's paintings helped define an idealized vision of American life and Christmas celebrations. Even now people seek to emulate the merriment and magic exemplified in Rockwell's imagery — from tired toy store clerks to a boy discovering Santa kissing his mom to the great holiday dinner. Rockwell produced 29 Christmas covers as well as greeting cards and other holiday scenes.

The holiday season would not be the same without the work of artist Norman Rockwell. His influential images helped reflect a glorified version of American life and have helped to make the holiday season even more special for millions of people.

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# A simple, tasty holiday treat

Baking is a holiday tradition in many families. Gingerbread cookies may be the first baked goods that come to mind when people envision the holiday season, but celebrants need not limit themselves when preparing special treats for their families.

Macaroons are one beloved baked good that busy holiday hosts may believe are too time-consuming to prepare. However, the following recipe for "Coconut Macaroons with Dried Cherries" from Laurey Masterton's "The Fresh Honey Cookbook" (Storey) is easy to whip up and makes for a tasty holiday treat.

### Coconut Macaroons with Dried Cherries

Makes 25 to 30 small cookies

- 1 cup unsweetened flaked coconut
- 1 cup sweetened flaked coconut
- 8 egg whites
- Salt ¼ cup dried cherries
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon honey, preferably orange blossom honey
- 1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.

2. Combine the unsweetened and sweetened coconut on a baking sheet. Lightly toast in the oven for 5 to 10 minutes. Keep close watch so the mixture does not burn, though you do want a nice toasted golden brown color. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

3. Reduce the oven temperature to 325 F. (If using a convection oven, leave at 350 F.)

4. Whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt in a medium bowl until the whites stiffen into firm peaks.

5. Fold the toasted coconut into the egg white mixture.

6. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Drop tablespoon-size rounds, perhaps using a small ice cream scoop, of the coconut mixture onto the baking sheet. Press one or two dried cherries into the top of each macaroon.

7. Melt the butter and honey together in a microwave on high for 20 seconds. Drizzle the mixture over the top of each macaroon. Sprinkle with a tiny pinch of salt.

8. Bake the macaroons for 20 to 25 minutes, until lightly browned (watch carefully to avoid burning), or for 8 to 10 minutes if using a convection oven. The macaroons should be dry to the touch. You may need to bake them longer if it is a humid day. If you live in a dry area, these will keep well for a week.

Chef's note: If you want to be really fancy, melt some chocolate and dip each one halfway into it.

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t probably comes as no surprise that **more traffic fatalities due to drunk driving occur around the New Year's holiday than any other time of year.** Of course, drivers should never drink and drive. With your safety in mind, these community sponsors urge you to review these important tips for hosting or attending a safe celebration!

A New Year is coming, bringing much celebration, With good friends and good times and free-flowing libation --So party on hearty, but leave driving alone, Because we want to see you get safely home!

### WITH BEST WISHES TO EVERYONE FOR A SAFE & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

### "Key" Strategies For A Safe New Year's Celebration:

### Plan an alcohol-free celebration

 Host a fondue or "make your own" ice cream sundae party as a fresh alternative. Add some fun party games to keep guests entertained without drinking!

Check your keys with the host – This is an effective strategy for giving the host some control over inebriated guests.

**Keep the number of a taxi company handy** – A good tip for both party guests and hosts alike.

Offer to drive a guest home – Start the New Year off right by performing a good deed and help keep drunk drivers off the road.

Appoint a designated driver – Use the buddy system and you can return the favor next time.

**Provide lots of snacks to party guests** – Drinking on an emptystomach rapidly increases the potentially destabilizing effects of alcohol.

**Post transportation info on party invites** – Include information for public transportation, carpools and taxi company phone numbers.

**Don't let a friend drive drunk** – Take the car keys away or use one of the strategies above to see your friends safely home.







A coording to a survey of more than 2,000 adults in the United States conducted in September 2017 by the International Council of Shopping Centers, holiday shoppers still prefer to shop at physical retailers for their gifting needs. The survey found that nearly all shoppers (96 percent) planned to make a purchase from a retailer who has both a physical and online presence. Furthermore, 91 percent of holiday shoppers said they were planning to buy some of the items they researched online at physical locations. Even though online sales are booming, this data reinforces the fact that holiday shoppers still rely on brick-and-mortar stores. Retailers who understand how to seamlessly offer both online resources as well as a strong physical retail presence may enjoy an especially profitable holiday season.

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**5** Reasons it's smart to use credit when holiday shopping

The average American shopper will spend around \$975 on holiday gifts, according to past spending trends and estimates from the American Research Group and the National Retail Federation. Although shoppers have various payment options at their disposal, the use of credit cards remains a popular and financially savvy way to handle purchases, albeit when done correctly.

### 1. Build your credit history.

Creditors look at how individuals use credit cards when determining credit scores. One of the biggest components of a credit scoring model is payment history, or the pattern of using credit and paying it back on time. Making repeated purchases on credit cards and then paying the bill when it is due can result in a spike in credit score and help consumers build a healthy credit history. The key is to make payments in full and on time.

### 2. Credit is safer than carrying cash.

Stores are very busy during the holiday rush, and consumers are easily distracted. Carrying around large sums of cash for purchases can put you at risk for theft or losing the money along the way. There's little chance of having lost or stolen cash returned, but a credit card can be cancelled and replaced. Plus, financial institutions have security protocols in place to freeze accounts and erase purchases that were made under fraudulent scenarios.



### 3. Track your purchases.

Credit card companies track all purchases and will itemize shopping excursions on cardholders' statements. This can make it much easier to keep track of your spending. In addition, some stores do not require receipts for purchases made with credit cards. Credit cards are often a safe and effective way to handle holiday and everyday spending.





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### 4. Earn reward points while spending.

Competition in the credit card world is stiff, and many financial institutions are trying to entice customers with special deals for signing up and using their cards. Some credit cards give cash back. Others accrue points based on spending on particular categories, such as dining or travel. Rewards can be redeemed in various ways and can be a big bonus of using credit over cash.

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### 5. Cards may come with warranties.

Credit cards can provide built-in warranties on purchases made on the card, such as replacement coverage for an electronic device or cancellation insurance on a trip. What's more, if you have a dispute with a merchant or aren't happy with something you bought, you can often request a chargeback through the credit card company.

Credit cards have many advantages, but it's imperative that consumers pay their balances in full and on time.





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# Get to know favorite wines for giving



A glass of wine makes a nice accompaniment to a meal or something to enjoy and sip while conversing with friends in social situations. Many people have a favorite style of wine, and some even have a favorite vineyard. In addition, the popularity of wine makes it a versatile gift for the holidays or something to bring along to a holiday party as a hostess present.

Novice wine enthusiasts may be interested in learning more about wine so they can choose their wine selections for gifting and enjoyment more readily. According to the experts at Wine Enthusiast, learning to taste wine and differentiate between flavors is similar to appreciating art or music. Understanding the varietals can simplify the process of selecting wines.

• **Cabernet Sauvignon:** This is a fullbodied red grape heavily planted in the Bordeaux region of France. Cabernet generally has high levels of alcohol and tannins.

• **Merlot:** The smoothness and mild flavor of this red wine make it a great option for those who need an introduction to red wine. This wine is lower in tannins than Cabernet Sauvignon, and it tends to have a more fruity flavor profile as well. • **Cabernet Franc:** This is a light- to middle-weight wine that features a high acid content and savory flavors.

• Malbec and Carménère: Similar to Merlot, these grapes originated in France but then made their way to other regions of the world. Malbec is most popular in Argentina, while Carménère is grown in Chile.

• **Zinfandel:** Although mostly associated with the rosé wine White Zinfandel, Zinfandel is actually a medium-bodied red wine that originated in Croatia.

• **Pinot Noir:** Soft tannins and high acid give this light-bodied red wine its appeal. The grapes were first widely planted in France but can now be found elsewhere.

• **Chianti:** Chianti is the most famous Italian red wine in North America. It's a dry red that pairs very well with food. Chianti, which comes from the Chianti region in Tuscany, is made exclusively with Sangiovese grapes, or at least 80 percent of them and other blends.

• **Chardonnay:** This is a medium- to fullbodied dry white wine. The Chardonnay grape is a white grape from the Burgundy region of France.

• Sauvignon Blanc: Citrus-driven and often light-bodied, Sauvignon Blanc is another dry white grape planted widely in France. It also is a parent grape to Cabernet Sauvignon.



• Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio: Pinot Grigio is a zesty, dry white wine that is particularly associated with Italy even though it originated in France, where it is thought to be a mutation of the Pinot Noir grape. Pinot Grigio skins are not green like other white grapes, but have a gray hue, hence the name. • **Reisling:** Those who prefer a sweet white wine can opt for Reisling, which can be traced to Germany. It can be a good match for those who appreciate other sweet white wines, such as Moscato or Gewürztraminer.

There are many wines to tempt palates. When gifting, the selections mentioned above can tempt foodies and budding sommeliers alike.

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# Christmas trees brighten the season



Decked out in tinsel, lights, ornaments, and garland, Christmas trees are enduring symbols of the holiday season that boast a rich history.

Evergreen trees have been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years, and eventually became associated with Christianity. Plants and trees that remained green all year held special meaning to ancient peoples, and were purported to keep away illness and evil spirits.

Germans were credited with tying evergreen trees to Christmas celebrations. In the sixteenth century, devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, is believed to have first added lighted candles to these trees after he was inspired by twinkling stars in the night sky.

While early Americans found Christmas trees an oddity, the tradition, brought over by German settlers, eventually caught on. Today, between 25 and 30 million natural Christmas trees are sold in the United States each year, states the National Christmas Tree Association. Trees are grown in all 50 states and Canada. The following is a look at some popular tree varieties,

### Living Christmas trees

Living Christmas tree, which refers to those with their roots still intact, are popular among eco-conscious holiday enthusiasts. That's because living trees can be promptly planted after they've served their purpose indoors.

Opt for a moderately sized tree, as root balls on larger trees can be heavy and difficult to move. Living trees can typically be kept indoors for around seven to 10 days before they will need to be returned outside. Move such trees to a sheltered outdoor area for one to two weeks so they can reacclimate to the climate. So long as the ground is not frozen, trees can then be planted when the reacclimation period ends. Better Homes and Gardens suggests selecting a mild day to plant the tree.

### Fraser fir

Fraser fir trees are typically uniformly pyramid-shaped trees that have strong branches that turn slightly upward. These trees have good needle retention and a dark, blue-green hue. Many people feel these trees have a pleasant scent. Because they are such a quintessential Christmas tree, Fraser fir, as well as their close cousin, Balsam fir, tend to be more expensive than others.

### Scotch pine

One of the advantages of Scotch pine trees is their needle retention. Experts say Scotch pine needles will not drop off even if the tree is dry. Scotch pine is an introduced species brought to North America by European settlers, and it's known for dark green foliage and sturdy, stiff branches. The Scotch pine is one of the most popular Christmas trees today.

### White spruce

As a Christmas tree, the white spruce is known for excellent foliage color, short stiff needles and good needle retention. The blue-green color is pleasant, but when needles are crushed, the tree doesn't produce a favorable evergreen aroma. White spruce trees keeps their needles longer than other spruces.

With proper care, any variety of Christmas tree can look beautiful throughout the holiday season.

# Are poinsettias poisonous?

hristmas trees, Santa Claus, menorahs, and glittering lighting displays are just a few of the many prominent symbols of the holiday season. And while mistletoe might garner more attention and inspire more displays of affection, poinsettias are another prominent sign that the holiday season has arrived.

Thanks to its bright red and green colors, the poinsettia is perhaps the ideal holiday plant. But as much as it suits holiday decor and seems tailor-made for that special time of year between Thanksgiving and the first of January, the poinsettia has a reputation that few plants would want.

First discovered in Mexico and brought to the United States by Dr. Joel Poinsett, the poinsettia has long been rumored to be poisonous. However, the National Capital Poison Center notes that poinsettias are not deadly. In fact, the NCPC notes that the rumor that poinsettias are deadly may have been around for more than a century, tracing its origins all the way back to a child who was found dead lying next to a poinsettia plant. The plant was blamed for the child's death, and even though that blame was misplaced, the stigma stuck. WebMD notes that others trace the false rumors surrounding poinsettias to 1919, when parents blamed the death of their daughter, who they thought had eaten poinsettia leaves, on this ubiquitous holiday plant.

Even today, when researchers have long since proven that poinsettias are not deadly, many people still believe they can be fatal if consumed.

The NCPC notes that, in most cases, exposure to any part of a poinsettia plant in children or pets has little, if any, effect. However, if the plant is swallowed, some people and pets may experience symptoms including nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Some who touch the plant may develop a rash after contact.

While poinsettias are not deadly, the NCPC still advises those who plant to include the plant in their holiday decor to take every measure necessary to prevent children and pets from swallowing it. Placing poinsettias beyond the reach of kids and pets is one simple way to accomplish just that.

Poinsettias are seemingly everywhere come the holiday season. And because they're not fatal, celebrants can continue to display these beautiful plants that call to mind the colors of the holiday season.

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# Hot toy list for 2018

bid you grab your L.O.L. Surprise dolls last year? What about Hatchimals the year before? Each year, a new crop of must-have toys surfaces. Smart shoppers who do their research and prepare in advance of the holidays can grab these coveted gifts.

Each year, industry experts weigh in on which toys are sure to be hits with children and adults. This data can help shoppers become more informed consumers and may help prevent the last-minute rush when coveted gifts are already sold out and new stock is nowhere in sight. The following are some gifts children may want to see wrapped and waiting under the tree this year.

### Pomsies by Skyrocket

These are fashionable plush pets for children to nurture. They're adorable and designed to travel with children in a backpack or wrapped around kids' wrists. The kitties can be played with in a one-on-one setting and also have a mode for social play.

### Luvabella

This is a life-like baby doll that features many of the same surprises that come with a real live infant. Realistic facial expressions and responses, as well as interactive accessories, can make this a true-to-life experience for young girls or boys.

### Blind bag toys

Children seemingly can't get enough of collectible playthings that focus on the act of unboxing. The Toy Association says sales for collectible playthings grew





by 14 percent globally in 2017. The act of removing a surprise from packaging is just as exciting as the toy itself. Expect to find many more of these types of collectibles this year.

### Mecard

This is a battle-action game from Mattel based on the Korean animated series Turning Mecard. Mecards are cars that transform into hero or villain action figures when they drive over a powercharged card.

### Think & Learn Code-a-Pillar

This toy from Fisher-Price gives youngsters an early introduction to STEM. They learn basic coding, planning and sequencing skills by connecting segments of a cute caterpillar.

### SelfieMic Selfie Stick Microphone

Children who are into social media karaoke apps can transform themselves into pop stars. They can sing along to their favorite tunes as a solo artist or with friends in a group. This device works in conjunction with the StarMaker singing app available for iOs and Android.

### Slimy squishy toys

These types of toys were a big hit in 2017 and stand to remain big sellers this year. Make-your-own and premade versions of slime and squishy products are sure to be filling up the shelves of neighborhood stores. WeCool's Squishy Like Slime is one option to keep an eye on.

### K'NEX building sets

These sets from K'NEX marry tangible building with interactive play. Once kids build the sets, which can include roller coasters and more, they can take them on a virtual reality ride.

These are just some of the hot toys and gifts that are primed as big sellers for this holiday season.



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