



NATIONAL POINSETTIA TRIALS 2005

The National Poinsettia Trials, sponsored by the poinsettia breeders, were established to provide an independent evaluation of the many new cultivars that are introduced every year. In years like this, it's obvious why these trials are important. With 17 new introductions just this year, there are too many new cultivars for growers to adequately evaluate them all.

We hope these trials help growers focus on which cultivars might be the best fit in their operations based on their markets and production styles. Along with the university sites (North Carolina State, Purdue and University of Florida) the trial is also conducted by Joe Stoffregen at Homewood Nursery in Raleigh, N.C. These trials would not be possible without the cooperation and support of the following poinsettia breeders: Dummen USA, Ecke Ranch, Fischer USA, Oglevee Ltd. and Selecta First Class. The trials would also not be possible without our dedicated staff, including lead technical staffers Ingram McCall at North Carolina State University, Terri Kirk at Purdue University and Carolyn Bartuska at the University of Florida.

This report has been split into three sections: new introductions, page 22; the best of the trials, page 28; and recommended cultivars, page 32. This is the most complete coverage of last year's poinsettia trials you'll find anywhere, so make the most of it by using these reports to choose the right varieties for your production situation and market. Poinsettia trial coverage continues next month with the consumer preference surveys.

— Allen Hammer, John Dole and Jim Barrett



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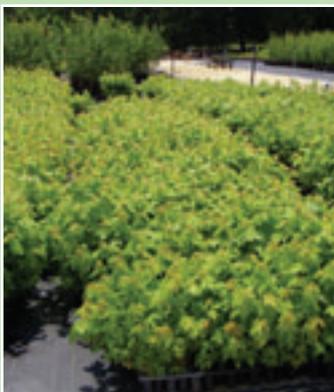
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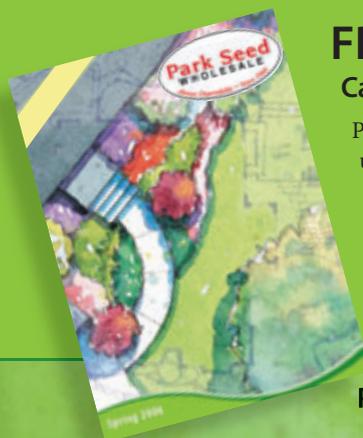
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NATIONAL POINSETTIA TRIALS

New Releases For 2006

Not as many new cultivars were introduced this year,
but the ones that were promise quite a show.

By John Dole, Allen Hammer and Jim Barrett

Seventeen new cultivars were in the National Poinsettia Trials for the first time in 2005 and should be available in 2006. The descriptions are based on how the cultivars performed in our trials. Five of these new cultivars performed so well they were selected for the Best Of The Trials list and are described in more detail in that list on page 28.

Red Cultivars

'AvantGarde Red' (Dümmen USA). This is an unusual red cultivar with the growth and form characteristics of the novelty cultivar 'AvantGarde'. 'AvantGarde Red' will probably be considered a novelty red by most growers. The deeply serrated bright red bracts do add interest and give the cultivar a very Christmas holiday look. The cultivar is worth a try, particularly for those growing 'AvantGarde'.

'Christmas Carol' (Selecta First Class). The bright-red bracts on this early to midseason cultivar are accentuated by dark-green foliage, dark-red transition bracts and very

large centers. Several other bright-red cultivars are available, but this one stood out. The bract presentation is flat with no green leaves visible through the bracts. The medium-vigor plants are extremely well branched and uniform.

'Enduring Red' (Ecke Ranch). When 'Enduring Pink' was released, it found a place as a low-vigor, early-flowering plant with bright-pink bracts that did not fade. The low-vigor growth of this series provided a finished plant with strong branches and no late stretch problems. The newly released colors in this series are well matched in terms of appearance, growth habit and finish timing. The Enduring series has a very upright bract display with somewhat elongated bracts, uniform breaking and dark-green foliage. 'Enduring Red' is medium red with darker red younger bracts. For 6½-inch pots add one (in the South) to three (in the North) weeks of long days after the pinch to your normal schedule to ensure adequate height at flowering. This series will be easy to grow and certainly find a place in the poinsettia market.

'Freedom Early Red' (Ecke

Ranch). With some of the first poinsettia shipments going out soon after Halloween, there is a market for early-flowering cultivars. 'Freedom Early Red' joins several of the earliest -flowering cultivars available: 'Early Orion', 'Early Joy Red' and 'Autumn Red'. It is interesting to note that while 'Freedom Early Red' flowered only a few days before 'Freedom Red' in our trials, it started coloring as much as 10 days earlier. Other early flowering cultivars also showed this trait. Because of the earlier initiation, it is important to plant this cultivar 1-2 weeks earlier than 'Freedom Red' to build adequate plant structure before initiation. The growth habit and appearance of 'Freedom Early Red' is similar to 'Freedom Red' and earliness is the important characteristic of this cultivar.

'Metro Red' (Dümmen USA). This cultivar is significant because it is one of the few late-season red cultivars introduced recently; 'Metro Red' flowered December 3 at North Carolina State University (NCSU). The cultivar has smooth-edged, dark-red bracts with even darker

young bracts. The bract presentation is flat to upright with multiple branches maturing uniformly. Foliage is dark green and plants are medium to low vigor.

'Red Dragon' (Fischer USA). This cultivar has the medium-green leaves and bract color of the familiar 'Peterstar Red', but it is more vigorous and upright. 'Red Dragon' stood out in the trials due to large, bright orange-red bracts among the many dark-red cultivars. The vigorous plants are very uniform with excellent breaking, and this cultivar is significant in that it can be grown for large displays. The rounded bracts are flat to upright in presentation.

'Silent Night Crimson Red' (Selecta First Class). Similar to 'Silent Night', this cultivar has slightly darker red bracts. The elongated bracts are dark red with darker red younger bracts. The presentation is flat to upright. The foliage is dark green. Plants are uniform and breaking is good.

1090 (Name to be announced) (Ecke Ranch). This early-flowering cultivar (similar to or just ahead of Freedom) has dark-red bracts with



'AvantGarde Red'



'Christmas Carol'



'Enduring Red'



'Freedom Early Red'



'Metro Red'



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very dark-red young bracts. The important characteristics that distinguish 1090 from other early cultivars are good vigor, excellent branching and distinctively upright bracts on very strong branches. This variety should be useful for large plants in 6½-inch or larger containers.

White Cultivars

'Enduring White' (Ecke Ranch). The comments for 'Enduring Red' apply to this cultivar as well, except it has creamy white bracts. It will be grown as part of the Enduring series of colors.

'Jester White' not pictured (Ecke Ranch). As with 'Jester Red' and 'Jester Marble', 'Jester White' has elongated bracts that are initially very upright but lay down as the plant matures in warmer production areas. The bracts are creamy white, and the inflorescence is rather

stretched out. Flowering is midseason. Plants are medium to high vigor, and foliage is dark green. Branching is very uniform.

Pink Cultivars

'Mars Pink' (Fischer USA). This is the first cultivar released as a companion to 'Mars Red'. 'Mars Pink' is similar to 'Mars Red' in size but flowered about one week earlier in the NCSU trials. The bract color ranges from dark reddish-pink on the young bracts to pale pink with darker veins on the older bracts. The grayish cast common on the older bracts of many other pink cultivars is evident but not as pronounced. The pink color was brighter in the Purdue trials and is probably a reflection of the cooler finish temperatures. The somewhat rounded bracts have a smooth edge and a flat presentation. The foliage is dark green, and the plants are uni-

form and well branched. This cultivar will probably be most useful for growers producing 'Mars Red'.

Marble Cultivars

'Christmas Time Crazy Marble' (Selecta First Class). With the longest, but most accurate, name of any cultivar in the trials, 'Christmas Time Crazy Marble' has large, contorted, white and pink, droopy bracts. This cultivar is more vigorous and has larger bracts than the similar appearing 'Strawberries 'n Cream'; it is more compact than the also similar appearing 'AvantGarde', which often has an elongated, open inflorescence. The two-toned, dark-light green foliage is also contorted. Plants had good breaking but were not uniform within the crop. In direct comparisons, consumers in the Florida and Purdue trials preferred 'Strawberries 'n Cream' over Crazy Marble.

'Enduring Marble' (Ecke Ranch). See the comments for 'Enduring Red' above. 'Enduring Marble' has creamy white bracts with a pale pink blaze.

Novelty Cultivars

'Malibu Rose' (Dümmen USA). This low-vigor, rose-colored cultivar does not fit the traditional red or pink cultivar market. It is a true novelty color. The transition bracts are lighter in color and have green margins that detracted from the bright rose-colored center bracts. Some may consider 'Malibu Rose' a dark pink cultivar when displayed with red cultivars. Foliage is dark green, and growth is compact.

'Prestige Maroon' (Ecke Ranch). This is probably the most notable cultivar in the trials this year. 'Prestige Red' has become popular because of its uniformity in



'Red Dragon'



'Silent Night Crimson Red'



'1090'

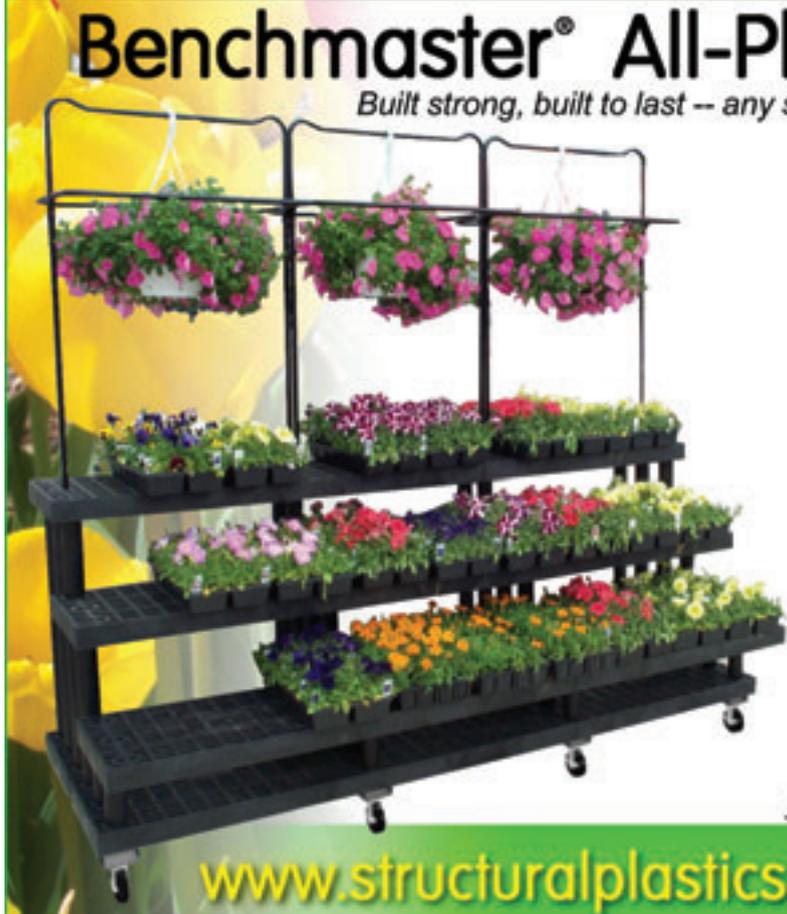


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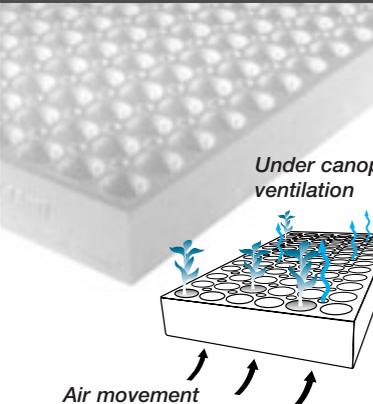
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growth, excellent breaking and strong shoots. 'Prestige Maroon' is a darker brick-red version (think 'Chianti' or 'Merlot'), with the younger bracts even darker red. The color is darker in cooler climates and more pronounced under artificial light. In the bright sunlight of a greenhouse the color dif-

ference between 'Prestige Maroon' and other dark-red cultivars is not as apparent. The medium to vigorous plants have dark green foliage. Relative to 'Prestige Red', the height and flowering time varied among the trial sites. Where will this cultivar fit in? It will probably compete with 'Cortez Burgundy' if

finished cool and displayed under artificial light. In addition, 'Prestige Maroon' does not fade in the postharvest environment as 'Cortez Burgundy' does. 'Prestige Maroon' will require additional trialing, consumer opinions and production research to find its place in the dark red market. ▶



'Christmas Time Crazy Marble'



'Enduring Marble'



'Malibu Rose'



'Prestige Maroon'



'Valentine'

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'Valentine' (Selecta First Class). 'Valentine' is the latest entry into the curly bract category. The bracts are a little curlier and more elongated than 'Winter Rose Dark Red' but with a similar color. The heads were about the same size as 'Winter Rose Dark Red' and larger

than 'Twister'. 'Valentine' flowers after 'Winter Rose Early Red' but before 'Winter Rose Dark Red' or 'Twister'. Plants are uniform with excellent breaking. Foliage is dark green. Plants in the trials this year had weaker stems than either Winter Rose or 'Twister' but this

may be related more to cutting quality for a first year introduction than a characteristic of the cultivar. **GPN**

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Harmony In Growth

'Dulce Rosa': One Of A Kind



This new cultivar, bred by Ecke Ranch and distributed exclusively through Ball Seed, is notable as the first commercially available poinsettia hybrid. A cross of *Euphorbia pulcherrima* and *Euphorbia cornuta*, the appearance and growth habit of 'Dulce Rosa' is very different from standard poinsettias. It is a very vigorous plant with bright — even fluorescent — pink bracts. Cooler finish temperatures greatly intensify bract color, which lightens with age. The bracts and leaves are small, narrow and pointed, and the very large, green cyathia are prominent and numerous. 'Dulce Rosa' did not produce pollen, but there is enough bract color to market plants in mid November.

Care must be taken to prevent the plants from becoming too tall and stretched. Ball has provided cultural guidelines specific to this cultivar. 'Dulce Rosa' is more responsive to paclobutrazol or Sumagic than to Cycocel or a B-Nine/Cycocel tank mix. The plant is easier to control if grown cool or outside. It can be double pinched and responds to pinching more like a spring crop than a poinsettia. Postharvest performance of this variety is not as good as we have come to expect in poinsettias but adequate for such a novel plant. 'Dulce Rosa' should not be boxed or shipped in a sleeve for a long period of time. It is also sensitive to heat delay during production, which can significantly delay color development.

'Dulce Rosa' is a unique plant, and many consumers had a positive reaction when they saw the plant in the 2005 trials. The cultivar has potential as a spring crop because its appearance is so different from poinsettias. Growers should become familiar with this new plant before producing large numbers because it does not follow a traditional poinsettia production or handling schedule.

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