



NATIONAL POINSETTIA TRIALS

Best Of The Trials

This year's list of stand-outs includes both old and new cultivars.

By Jim Barrett, John Dole and Allen Hammer

Determining which cultivars will be selected as best of the trials is no easy matter. Each of the three university trial sites picked the 12 varieties that performed best in their trial. The varieties that were picked by at least two of the sites were determined to be the best varieties in the National Poinsettia Variety Trials for 2005. A cultivar may have been selected because it was particularly appealing to consumers, offers growers a unique feature such as growth habit or timing that is not available in other varieties, or because there is a good range of colors to fit the red in the series.

This year, we decided to show our voting ballot because a number of selected cultivars did not make the best of trials list. These cultivars might perform well only in one region and could be of interest regionally or by specific growers.

Cultivar Descriptions

'Arctic White'. The strong characteristic of 'Arctic White' is its bright-white bracts, one of the brightest available. The bracts are greenish when young and brighten to white as they age. 'Arctic White' has low vigor, and the leaves and bracts are smaller than average. It should be given a longer vegetative growth period to produce plants of a desired size. It finishes late and has an upright growth habit.

'Christmas Carol'. This new variety made the best of trials list in its first year. It has distinctive bright-red bracts with contrasting bright yellow and green cyathia. Consumers have told us they prefer bright bracts over the dark bluish-red that is so common, which is why 'Christmas Carol' is so good. It is a midseason variety with a good growth habit.

Christmas Feelings series. 'Christmas Feelings Red' has made the best of trials list before, and this year, the series is being recognized for its uniformity of growth habit, consistent early midseason timing and quality of the colors. The series has a nice low to medium vigor with upright branching. 'Christmas Feelings Red' has large, bright-red bracts. This is a dark-leaf series, and the colors are as good or better than other dark-leaf varieties.

'Christmas Star'. This cultivar has tight clusters of dark-red, small- to medium-sized bracts that face upward, producing a very uniform floral display that looks like stars. 'Christmas Star' is not so different that it would be considered a novelty, but it does create a different appearance compared to varieties with large bracts. Under cooler temperatures or with use of more growth regulators the star appearance is more defined. Finish timing is mid-season. 'Christmas Star' branches well and has a strong growth habit.

'Cortez Burgundy' (not pictured). This cultivar is significant because it is almost always at the top of consumer evaluations. Like some of the other novelties, it may not be the easiest to produce. It finishes later than other Cortez colors and is sensitive to high temperatures. It also has a tendency to sport red, but the amount of sporting has been greatly reduced the past two years. Because of its consumer appeal, 'Cortez Burgundy' should be positioned as a high-end product. It is a mistake for growers to ship it as just another color.

Enduring series. 'Enduring Pink' has become established as a very nice pink, the best for the South. It is a dark-leaf cultivar with early flowering and should be used to replace 'Freedom Pink' and 'Maren' in the South. 'Enduring Pink' has low to medium vigor and is easy to grow. Because of its success, the other colors in the series are now being introduced. 'Enduring' ▶

Best Of Trials Selections

Variety	Purdue University	North Carolina State University	University of Florida	Best of the Trials (Selected at two or more locations)	Breeder
'Arctic White'	x	x		XX	Dummen USA
'Christmas Carol'	x	x	x	XX	Selecta First Class
Christmas Feelings series	x	x	x	XX	Selecta First Class
'Christmas Star'	x	x		XX	Selecta First Class
'Cortez Burgundy'		x	x	XX	Fischer USA
'Dulce Rosa'	x				Ecke Ranch
Enduring series	x	x	x	XX	Ecke Ranch
Mars series	x				Fischer USA
'Metro Red'	x				Dummen USA
'Monet Twilight'		x	x	XX	Ecke Ranch
'Novia'			x		Fischer USA
'Orion Red'		x			Fischer USA
Premium series	x	x	x	XX	Dummen USA
'Prestige Maroon'	x	x		XX	Ecke Ranch
'Prestige Red'	x	x	x	XX	Ecke Ranch
'Shimmer Surprise'			x		Ecke Ranch
'Silent Night'			x		Selecta First Class
'Sonora White Glitter'	x		x	XX	Fischer USA
'Visions of Grandeur'		x	x	XX	Ecke Ranch



'Arctic White'



Premium series, 'Premium Red' pictured



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Red' is a very nice bright red and 'Enduring White' and 'Enduring Marble' may be the best dark leaf cultivars in their respective color.

'Monet Twilight' (not pictured). This relatively old variety is always among the consumer favorites. Where poinsettias are sold by name, many consumers can recognize this

variety from a distance and call it by name. 'Monet Twilight' may be the definition of difficult to grow. It is very vigorous, requiring a lot of growth regulator, and needs higher fertilization than most cultivars. 'Monet Twilight' is becoming much less common in mass markets because of these difficulties; other

growers should continue producing it and take advantage of its appeal.

Premium series. This series is characterized by early timing, low vigor, upright branches, large leaves and large flat bracts. 'Premium Red' is dependable and easy-to-grow. There are now several colors in the series that match its

growth habit and timing. Lack of uniformity and sporting in some of the colors has been an issue in the past, but the series was much improved this year. Potentially important in the series are Picasso, which has a color similar to 'Monet Twilight', and Miro, which has less red coloration and is generally similar to 'Monet'.

'Prestige Maroon'. This is a new sport of 'Prestige Red' that has a growth habit and appearance very similar to 'Prestige Red'. The maroon color seems to be better in cooler climates. It will be interesting to see how this variety is accepted by growers and retailers and whether or not it can create some interest as a novelty similar to 'Cortez Burgundy'.

'Prestige Red' (not pictured). This has become a dominate variety primarily because of its extremely upright growth habit and branch strength. 'Prestige Red' makes a great plant at close spacing and for larger, upscale produc-

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'Prestige Maroon'



'Visions of Grandeur'



*Christmas Feelings series,
'Christmas Feelings Red' pictured*

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tion. One weakness is its sensitivity to heat delay, so finish timing may vary from year to year in warm climates. Also, Maroon is the only other color available.

'Sonora White Glitter' (not pictured). This variety is another consumer favorite year after year. It finishes late and may have considerable sporting. The sporting has been less the past two years, and consumers do not complain about the variation. Consumers are also attracted to the transition bracts on this variety, which makes it easier to sell before it is fully developed.

'Visions of Grandeur'. This new variety is in Ecke's special marketing program. It has strong consumer appeal and should be positioned as a high-value novelty. The bracts are large and slightly turned at the edges. Bract color is light cream at first and finishes a soft peach. 'Visions of Grandeur' is a very vigorous plant! It should be stacked or ringed in all container

sizes except 4½ inch. In warm climates, it is important to use growth regulators early to control growth after the pinch and produce stronger stems. Compared to cyathia development, bract size and color develop later, and plants may need to be held a week or so past cyathia opening to reach optimum

appearance, making its timing closer to midseason than early. **GPN**

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Enduring series, 'Enduring Red' pictured



'Christmas Star'



'Christmas Carol'



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