



# NATIONAL POINSETTIA TRIALS

## Consumer Poinsettia Picks

The 2009 National Poinsettia Trials, held at four sites throughout the United States, offer growers and retailers insight into how poinsettias perform in their respective locations — and what consumers want for the next holiday season.

By Roberto Lopez, John Dole  
and Jim Barrett

Through the years, all four National Poinsettia Cultivar Trials sites have seen an increase in the number of consumers evaluating poinsettias, both new varieties and old favorites. And this year was no exception: More than 1,700 individuals filled out surveys at the University of Florida, North Carolina State University, Purdue University and Homewood Nursery poinsettia events, which provided a good look at consumer opinions.

### Consumers by the Numbers

At the University of Florida, more than 550 eager consumers gathered to evaluate plants that were displayed in the greenhouse. Survey participants were asked to choose their favorite three novelty and favorite red poinsettias out of 10 of each selected cultivars, and their favorite

white, pink, marble and peppermint out of five of each on display. Plants were numbered and not labeled with a cultivar name. Attendees were not offered an incentive for completing the survey.

At North Carolina State University, 69 percent of survey participants were female. All 93 cultivars were displayed under fluorescent lighting indoors with cultivar name clearly labeled for attendees to evaluate. To make the survey easier for the nearly 200 consumer participants, selected cultivars were organized into six categories: red, white, pink, marble, peppermint and novelty. Respondents then selected their three favorite cultivars within each category. In addition, consumers were asked to select their three favorite cultivars overall. No incentives were provided to the public for voting.

Visitors to the Purdue open house filled out an extensive poinsettia preference survey with the



incentive of a chance to win one of 25 poinsettia plants being raffled off. Nearly 150 visitors, 55 percent female, filled out the survey. All 93 cultivars were displayed indoors under fluorescent lighting and labeled with numbers, breeder and cultivar names. Similar to NCSU, participants were asked to choose their 10 favorite cultivars out of all of the cultivars on display. In a separate room, respondents were asked to choose their three favorite cultivars in each of the following categories: red, white, pink and novelty.

Customers at Homewood Nursery in Raleigh, N.C., completed more than 800 surveys from Nov. 21 to Dec. 14, 2009. Consumers were asked



**Table 1.** Cultivars highlighted in green were selected at three locations and those highlighted in blue were selected in two locations. At all three university trial sites, consumers were asked to select their three favorite red and novelty cultivars. For the white and pink categories, they were asked to select one favorite cultivar.

NCSU	Florida	Purdue
<b>FAVORITE RED</b>		
'Christmas Feelings Merlot'	'Prestige Red'	'Classic Red'
'Velocity Red'	'Orion Red'	'Viking'
'Classic Red'	'Christmas Day' (SK 64)	'Christmas Feelings Red'
'Ecke 1139'	'Mira Red'	'Prestige Red'
'Christmas Feelings Red'	'Viking'	'Mira Red'
<b>FAVORITE WHITE</b>		
'White Christmas Evol.'	'White Christmas Evol.'	'Classic White'
'Whitestar'	'Whitestar'	'Mars White'
'Christmas Feelings White'	'Premium Polar'	'Whitestar'
<b>FAVORITE PINK</b>		
'Polly's Pink'	'Polly's Pink'	'Mars Pink'
'Pink Cadillac'	'Mars Pink'	'Pink Cadillac'
'Christmas Feelings Pink'	'Classic Pink'	'Polly's Pink'
<b>FAVORITE NOVELTY</b>		
'Ice Punch'	'Ecke HC-59B' (pink euphorbia hybrid)	'Tapestry'
'Sonora White Glitter'	'Ice Punch'	'Ice Punch'
'Ruby Frost'	'Cortez Burgundy'	'Sonora White Glitter'



to select their five favorite cultivars out of 40 cultivars on display. No incentives were offered to customers for filling out a survey.

### Celebrity Cultivars

For the third consecutive year, the overall favorite cultivar of the NCSU, Homewood and Purdue trials was 'Ice Punch' (Ecke). However, when considering just the novelty cultivars, 'Ice Punch' fell to second place at two of the university trial sites, behind Ecke's new 'Holly Point' replacement, 'Tapestry', and the bright pink Experimental HC-59B Euphorbia hybrid. The second and third overall favorites for 2009 were 'Ruby Frost' (Syngenta) and experimental 'HC-18B' (Ecke). 'Ruby Frost' caught the eyes of consumers with its charming, creamy-white bracts with ruby red margins and veins. The unique euphorbia hybrid 'HC-18B' intrigued attendees with its unique appearance: small, narrow pink bracts and pronounced clusters of cyathia.

Other cultivars that ranked in the top 10 overall cultivars in at least two locations were 'Classic Red' and 'Orange Spice' (Ecke); 'Carousel Dark Red', 'Cortez Burgundy' and 'Sonora White Glitter' (Syngenta); and 'White Christmas Evol.' (Selecta).

### Red Revolution

While the spectacular novelties

OVERALL FAVORITES		
NCSU	Purdue	Homeood
'Ice Punch'	'Ice Punch'	'Ice Punch'
'White Christmas Evol.'	'Ruby Frost'	'Primero Glitter' (39-02B)
'Polly's Pink'	'Ecke HC-18B'	'Ecke HC-18B'
'Sonora White Glitter'	'Orange Spice'	'Ruby Frost'
'Ruby Frost'	'Sonora White Glitter'	'White Christmas Evol.'
'Ecke HC-18B'	'Winter Rose Early Red'	'Premium Picasso'
'Sonora White Glitter Exp.'	'Cortez Burgundy'	'Carousel Dark Red'
'Christmas Feelings Red Cinnamon'	'Novia'	'Cortez Burgundy'
'Classic Red'	'Carousel Dark Red'	'Sonora Jingle'
'Christmas Feelings Merlot'	'Classic Red'	'Orange Spice'



draw much attention in the surveys, consumers buy primarily red varieties, the largest color category in the trials. This year, more than 50 percent of the cultivars in the national trials were red, making a consensus at all four sites virtually impossible. However, 'Christmas Feelings Red' (Selecta), 'Classic Red' (Ecke), 'Prestige Red' (Ecke),

'Mira Red' (Syngenta) and 'Viking' (Dümmen) were selected as the best reds in 2009 in at least two locations. Southern voters, for the third time in a row, ranked 'Prestige Red' as their favorite red at the University of Florida trial. Those in North Carolina chose 'Christmas Feeling Merlot' (Selecta). In the North, 'Classic Red' (Ecke) moved

*Table 2. Cultivars highlighted in green were selected at three locations and those highlighted in blue were selected in two locations. During the North Carolina State and Purdue consumer open house events held on Dec. 2 and 4, 2009, respectively, participants were shown all cultivars displayed under fluorescent lamps. During the Homeood Nursery & Garden Center retail customer survey conducted from Nov. 21 to Dec. 14, 2009, 40 poinsettia cultivars were displayed, identified by a number. Customers selected their five favorite without ranking them. Attendees received no for voting at NCSU and Homeood.*

up one spot to become the top red at the Purdue trial.

### Winning Whites

'White Christmas Evol.' (Selecta's SK 63) was the favorite white cultivar at North Carolina State and Florida and on the overall top ten list for NCSU and Homeood. For more than three years,



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This isn't too surprising: 'White Christmas' has been selected as the favorite white cultivar, and the improved 'White Christmas Evol.' is continuing the trend. The grower favorite, 'Whitestar' (Syngenta), was a close second at all three university trial sites.

## Passionate Pinks

'Polly's Pink' (Ecke) continues to be the standout pink cultivar among consumers thanks to its unique fluorescent, bright-pink bracts. It was again the favorite pink at the University of Florida and NCSU this year. Other pink cultivars that were highly ranked at two locations:

'Mars Pink' (Syngenta) and 'Cadillac Pink' (Dümmen). [GPN](#)

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## Acknowledgements

The national trials would not be possible without the coordinated cooperation and support of the following breeders: Dümmen USA, GroLink, Paul Ecke Ranch, Selecta First Class, Syngenta Flowers and the University of Connecticut. The trials would also not be possible without our dedicated greenhouse staff and undergraduate and graduate student help, including technicians Ingram McCall at North Carolina State University, Carolyn Bartuska at the University of Florida and Diane Camberato at Purdue University.



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