

# Critique of the 2014 Poinsettia Introductions

OF MORE THAN 50 TRIALED VARIETIES,  
14 NEW POINSETTIAS ARE BEING  
INTRODUCED AND OFFERED TO  
GROWERS THIS YEAR.

**By Jim Barrett, Wayne Brown and John Dole**

**T**his was the 21st year for the North American Poinsettia Trials, and results again illustrated the value of multiple trial sites. The trials are conducted at Homewood Nursery and Garden Center in Raleigh, North Carolina State University (NCSU), University of Florida and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre Vineland Station, Ontario. There were more than 50 numbered or trialed varieties evaluated in 2013. Of these, 14 new varieties are being introduced and offered to growers for 2014. The performance of the new varieties and opinions are described below.

In Ontario, the varieties were finished at both 62 and 66° F. The low light levels in Ontario provided a great test of a variety's ability to produce strong stems and the ability to produce and hold centers. This year in Florida and North Carolina conditions supported Botrytis and bract edge burn problems, so the varieties that were more resistant to these problems shined.

The North American Poinsettia Trials are conducted in cooperation with the poinsettia breeder/marketing companies. The trials and this information would not be possible without their support. We appreciate the companies' willingness to provide their new selections for independent evaluation.



# Reds

**1. 'Advantage Red'** (Ecke). The general appearance of this new cultivar will remind you of 'Prestige Red', but bracts are larger and showier than Prestige. Bract color in Advantage is a little brighter, and it has larger centers with more cyathia. Advantage was slightly more vigorous at all three locations. At NCSU, Advantage finished Nov. 18 compared to Prestige on Nov. 22. In Ontario, Advantage finished Nov. 23 and Nov. 30 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. In Florida heat delay trials, Advantage did delay, but not as much as did 'Prestige Red'. 'Advantage Red' may be a good option for growers who can use Prestige but want a better plant in larger formats and for differentiated markets.

**2. 'Brilliant Red'** (Ecke). This cultivar was Oglevee 'Red Angel', but has been renamed and put back into trials because of grower demand. 'Brilliant Red' is low to medium vigor with dark green leaves. In Ontario, the small bracts were displayed flat, well above the foliage, but produced essentially no cyathia. In Florida and NCSU trials, the plants had medium-sized, bright red bracts with distinct centers and a large number of cyathia. However, bracts did not lay flat; rather they turned in different directions and appeared crowded together. As the plants matured, they were subject to some cyathia drop and bract edge burn and Botrytis. In Ontario, 'Brilliant Red' finished Nov. 28 and Dec. 1 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. At NCSU, it finished Nov. 22.

**3. 'Christmas Wish'** (Ball/Selecta). These plants had the attractive bright red bracts and large cyathia with nice complementary bright red, yellow and green coloration that is a main feature of recent introductions from Ball/Selecta. The interesting feature of 'Christmas Wish' is that the individual blooms stand out with bright red against the dark green leaves. In Europe, this is referred to as a star form, which is not commonly done for North American markets. However, surveys have indicated there are many U.S. consumers who like the attractive mix of red and green. Plants are medium (Ontario) to high (Florida) vigor with very good branching. The plants have the strong stems and moderately wide habit of 'Christmas Beauty'. In Ontario, 'Christmas Wish' finished Nov. 24 and Nov. 30 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. Also in Ontario, 'Christmas Wish' was similar in appearance to 'Christmas Day' but slightly bigger and finished about one week earlier. No bract edge burn or cyathia drop occurred on plants held in the greenhouse in Florida. For growers who like the habit of 'Christmas Day' or 'Christmas Beauty', 'Christmas Wish' appears to have considerable potential for use in larger formats.

**4. 'Majestic Red'** (Ecke). This cultivar brings a different appearance to poinsettias. The bracts form a very flat top and uniformly round plant. The medium to small size bracts are a brighter, slightly orange red and radiate out from large centers. In Ontario, bracts did not lay as flat and centers had four to six cyathia. Branching was very good with a wide, but not weak, habit. Vigor was low to medium in Florida and Ontario, but it loved North Carolina and was vigorous. Finish time was Nov. 20 in Florida and Nov. 25 at NCSU. In Ontario, 'Majestic Red' finished Dec. 1 and Dec. 4 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. Tests in Florida indicate 'Majestic Red' heat delays similar to 'Prestige Red'. Bract edge burn and cyathia drop were not a problem as plants were held in the greenhouse. 'Majestic Red' will be most useful in 6½-inch and larger sizes to show off the unique habit.

**5. 'North Star'** (Ecke). This dark-red cultivar produces large plants with a domed head. Centers are large with six to nine tightly packed, large cyathia that hold well in the greenhouse. 'North Star' is a great example of why multi-location trials are important. Plant vigor was medium in Florida and high in Ontario and North Carolina. Regional differences also occurred in branching and shoot growth. In Ontario and North Carolina, plants branched well and produced uniform shoots. Interestingly, some of the lower axillary shoots did not develop well, but there

were still four to five large flat bract clusters on top of plants consisting of medium to large-sized bracts with numerous secondary and tertiary bracts. In Florida, branching and plant shape were somewhat uneven among the plants. Most plants produced a few strong upright shoots, but often there

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were smaller thin laterals that grew out to the side. In Florida and North Carolina, the bracts rolled under as they aged and produced a novel but slightly unkempt appearance. 'North Star' showed color quickly and finished early mid-season. In Ontario, 'North Star' finished Nov. 22 and Nov. 26 at 62 and 66° F, respectively.

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#### 6. 'Prima Donna' (Dümmen/Red Fox).

These plants had bright red bracts and large centers with many small cyathia. The cyathia had nice, distinctive coloration and were held by the plant as it matured in the greenhouse. Dümmen is using the name "Prima" to refer to cultivars that have smaller leaves and bracts, which should allow for less physical damage during shipping and retail handling. The Prima cultivars are not in a "family" and do not necessarily have similar growth habits and appearances. An outstanding feature of 'Prima Donna' is excellent branching with strong stems and upright habit as observed at all three trial locations. Unfortunately, this was one of the first groups of plants to develop bract edge burn spots (calcium deficiency) in the Florida trial. In Florida and North Carolina, there was a small amount of stretch at the end of the crop that caused the plants to have an open appearance as the bracts expanded. In Ontario, the bracts tended to have a wavy margin and were slightly crinkled, creating a very untidy bract formation. Plants finished early season and were medium vigor.

#### 7. 'Prima Vera' (Dümmen/Red Fox). In

Florida, the most notable feature of this cultivar was that the plants may have had the strongest stems and best upright growth in the trials. Stem strength was quite good at the other locations, but not exceptional. Bracts are a dark red but are brighter than 'Premium Red'. Size was medium to large in Florida and NCSU trials but small to medium in Ontario. Bracts are slightly wavy rather than flat like Premium. There was some variation in the appearance of the plants. Some had lighter bract color, some had more non-uniform shoot elongation and some had bracts with longer petioles, which created a more open look in the centers. Also, some of the plants had small stray tertiary bracts that pointed upright in the middle of the cyathia, producing an unkempt appearance. Plants flowered Nov. 17 at NCSU and Nov. 22 and Nov. 26 at 62 and 66° F, respectively, in Ontario. Plants held cyathia well and did not develop bract edge burn when held in the greenhouse past flowering. 'Prima Vera' showed the best potential for growers in the Ontario trials.



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## Whites

**8. 'Premier White'** (Ecke). This is a new white in the Premier series. It is slightly less vigorous than Premier Red, and the bract size is smaller than either the red or pink cultivars. Premier finishes very early, and in warm climates it is difficult to hold the plants in the greenhouse. Premier White developed bract edge burn and cyathia drop as it matured. Like most dark-leaf cultivars, the color is not a pure white. 'Premier White' had a golden cast and looked nice with gold decorations. The cultivar did not grow well under Ontario conditions. 'Premier White' is best suited as a companion cultivar for growers who are using 'Premier Red'.

**9. 'Glace Early'** (Dümmen). In the 2012 trials, the new cultivar, 'Glace', gained considerable attention due to the pure white bract color; however, 'Glace' finishes too late for most markets and has small bracts. 'Glace Early' is an earlier version of 'Glace' that finishes the last week of November. 'Glace Early' is a light-leaf plant with medium to high vigor. It is upright with good stem strength and can be used in large pot sizes. The bract color in 'Glace Early' is not as white as in 'Glace', but 'Glace Early' is whiter than dark-leaf cultivars like 'Premium White'. 'Glace Early' needs to be fully developed before it can be shipped, since the first bracts are small and the later bracts fill in the canopy. This cultivar was not included in the Ontario trial. Cyathia retention was very good and no bract edge burn developed as the plants matured in Florida. In North Carolina, some Botrytis occurred and upper leaves developed small light spots. This cultivar is definitely one to watch, but needs more trialing.

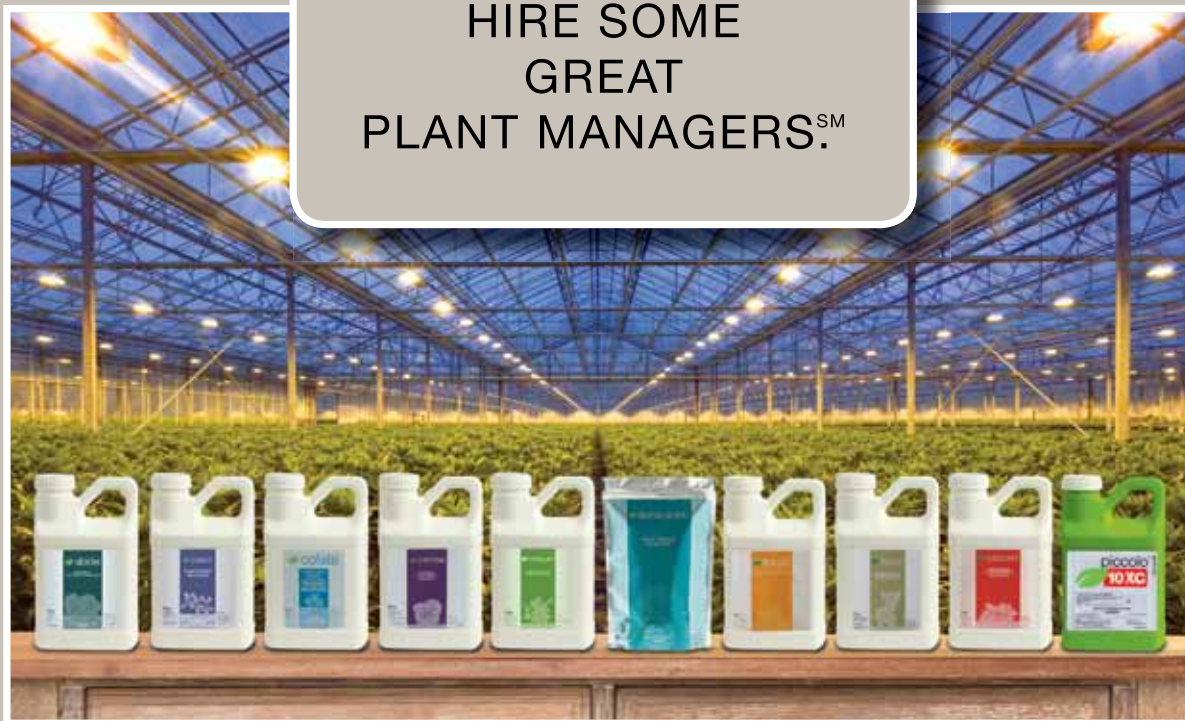
**10. 'Christmas Beauty North Pole'** (Ball/Selecta). This is a potentially very useful white to go with the popular Christmas Beauty family. It is well matched in flowering time and vigor to 'Christmas Beauty Red', except in Ontario where it was more compact. North Pole has the strong stems and the uniform rounded appearance notable in 'Christmas Beauty Red'. The Christmas Beauty family has low vigor but has the stem

strength to make very attractive plants up to an 8-inch pot size in warm climates. The bract color is a slightly lime white that is usually referred to as "polar" in other families, thus North Pole

is a good name. The plants held up well as they matured in the greenhouse. In Ontario, North Pole finished Nov. 30 and Dec. 5 at 62 and 66° F, respectively.

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## Novelties

**11. 'Christmas Glamour'** (Ball/Selecta). 'Christmas Glamour' is a dark-leaf plant that has a unique watermelon-pink bract color, which is the cultivar's main attribute. The general appearance of the plant form and the bract size and appearance are reminiscent of a Freedom. The plants are high vigor and finish mid-season. Plants have a wide vase-shaped habit with medium stem strength. Centers were small with only a few cyathia. Bract edge burn/Botrytis occurred at all three trial sites. While distinctive, it is important for retailers to know how the cultivar will be positioned in the market; it can appear to be either a light red or a dark pink. 'Christmas Glamour' will likely be best suited for use as a novelty in warm climates.






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**12. 'Christmas Ribbons'** (Ball/Selecta). This novelty has richly colored peppermint style bracts similar to 'Marco Polo'. 'Christmas Ribbons' exhibited average vigor with medium-sized dark green leaves with wavy margins. Plants are free branching with strong, broadly spreading laterals, which creates a very rounded habit. Flowering earlier than 'Marco Polo', by approximately one week, the medium-sized bracts are a lighter pink than 'Marco Polo' with the sunny yellow undertones clearly visible in the veins. Under Ontario conditions, the cyathia development was weak to non-existent. Under the higher light conditions of North Carolina, cyathia were few, but they did develop completely to anthesis. In Ontario, 'Christmas Ribbons' finished Nov. 26 and Nov. 28 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. It finished Nov. 20 in North Carolina.

**13. 'Majestic Pink'** (Ecke). This distinctive pink was introduced with 'Majestic Red' and is well matched to the red. The appearance is a very flat top with the long narrow bracts arranged in layers. The first transition bracts are lighter with green veins and the color becomes a rich salmon pink as newer bracts develop — thus the "majestic" connotation. The cultivar was low to medium vigor in Florida and Ontario, but should be used in 6½- to 8-inch containers to take advantage of the distinctive appearance. Interestingly, it loved North Carolina's climate where it was high vigor. In Ontario, 'Majestic Pink' finished Dec. 1 and Dec. 6 at 62 and 66° F, respectively. It finished Nov. 24 in North Carolina. Because of the wide growth habit, it is less likely to be useful in mass-market situations. However, 'Majestic Pink' should be considered by growers who are producing a differentiated product.

**14. 'Saturnus Eclipse'** (Beekenkamp; trialed under the name 'Alreddy Fancy'). This novelty cultivar has variegated, yellow and green leaves and small-to medium-sized, bright-red bracts. The appearance is generally similar to 'Tapestry'. Like other variegated-leaf poinsettias, plant vigor for 'Saturnus Eclipse' is very low and stems are thin. The plants are best used in various smaller formats. Compared to 'Tapestry', 'Saturnus Eclipse' has smaller leaves and less of a problem with necrotic edges. 'Tapestry' has a wider yellow margin in

the leaves. The transition bracts in 'Saturnus Eclipse' have better contrasting colors. Plants flowered early to mid-season and held up well in the greenhouse. The cultivar performed well at all three trial locations. 

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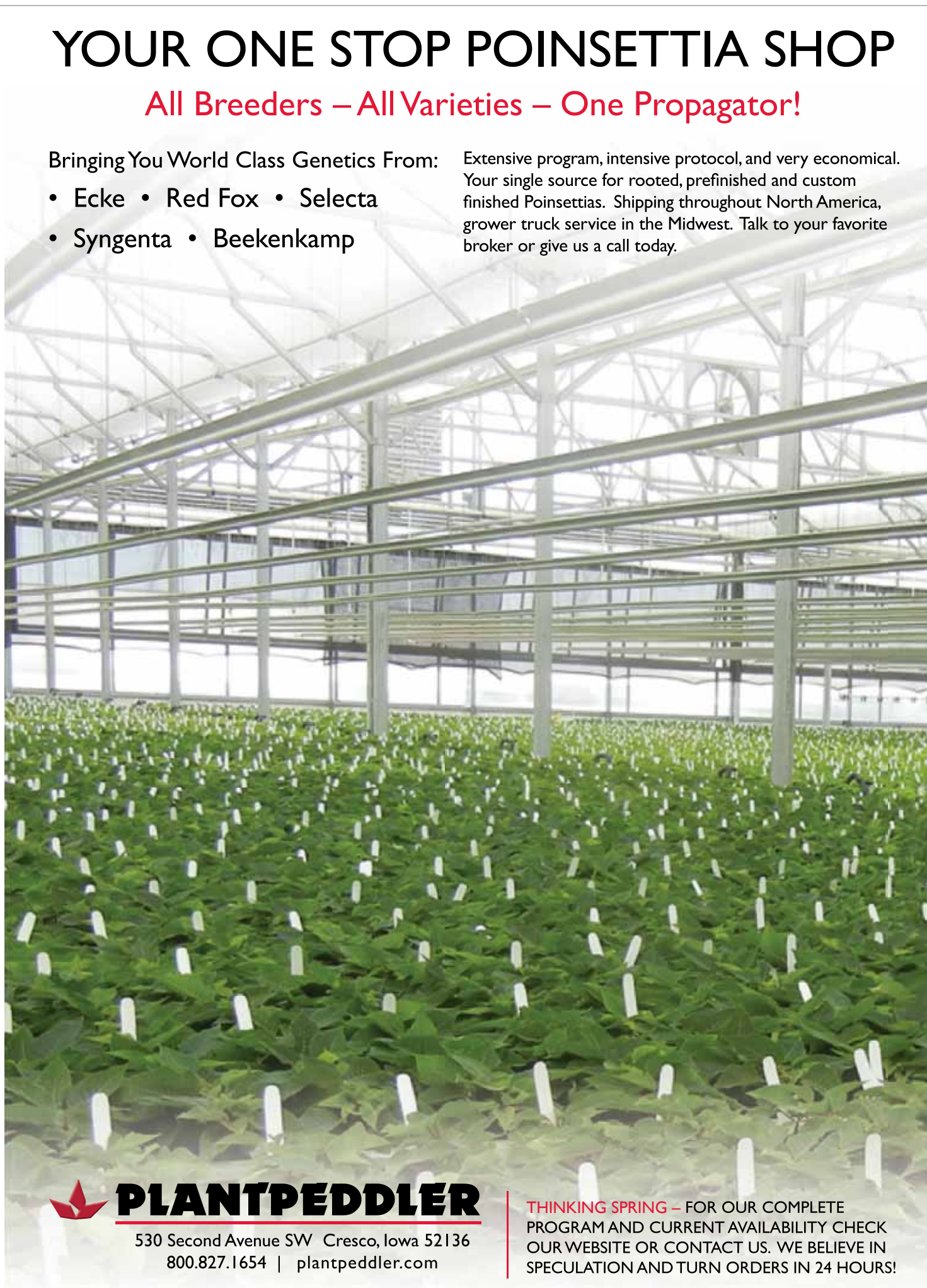
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