

New Cultivars for 2004

Whether you have specific production issues that need to be addressed or are just in the market for something new, this year's new introductions have something for everyone.

The following cultivars were in the trials for the first time in 2003 and are available to growers for the 2004 growing period. There were other cultivars in the trials that breeders have chosen not to offer at this time or that are being offered on an exclusive basis; these cultivars are not included.

The descriptions below are based on how the cultivars performed in our trials, and we have only written about those cultivars that we personally grew. Some of them performed so well that they were selected for the Best of Trials list; turn to page 30 for that listing.

RED CULTIVARS

1-99 (*Ecke Ranch*). Not pictured. (Previously trialed under

'Thanksgiving Red' and 'Velveteen Red'. As of this writing, a final name has not been chosen.) This is an early flowering cultivar with a general appearance and habit similar to 'Red Velvet'. 1-99 is more susceptible to Botrytis and bract edge burn than Red Velvet and most other dark leaf cultivars. The smooth, medium-red primary bracts are large, while other bracts are small, creating an open center. Cyathia clusters are small.

'Autumn Red' (*Ecke Ranch*). This is one of the earliest flowering cultivars (several days ahead of Orion). The bracts are upright, elongated and bright red with an orange cast; foliage is dark green. Plants are medium to low vigor. Distinctions of this cultivar are its earliness, bract presentation and plant strength. Compared to other dark leaf culti-

vars, Autumn Red is more susceptible to bract edge burn.

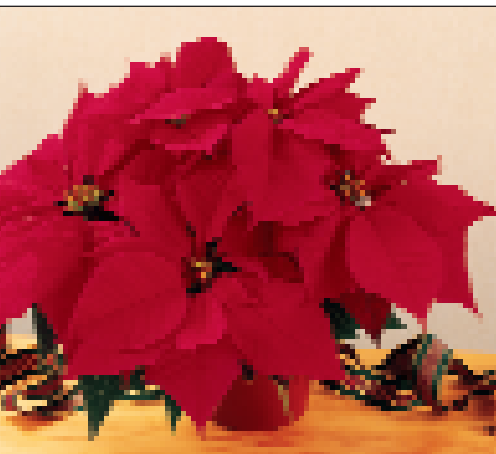
'Cortez Electric Fire' (*Fischer USA*). This distinct cultivar has bright orange-red bracts, which really stand out against the reds. While most American consumers prefer darker reds, they liked this cultivar, and it scored quite high in preference surveys. Electric Fire has the growth habit and timing of 'Cortez Red'.

'Christmas Poem' (*Selecta First Class*). (Number SK 39 in trials.) This is an early finishing cultivar with medium vigor. The primary bracts are large and elongated and held horizontal; the color is a slight bluish red. Christmas Poem is a nice cultivar with uniform breaking and strong, upright branches.

'Christmas Spirit 2' (*Selecta*

First Class). (Number SK 35 in trials.) This cultivar has medium sized, bright red bracts that are slightly heart shaped and held upright; foliage is dark green. Individual cyathia are larger than most cultivars and provide good contrasting yellow, green and red colors. It has good lateral shoot development and medium vigor. Timing is early midseason. Christmas Spirit 2 scored high in consumer preference surveys.

'Early Orion' (*Fischer USA*). Very similar in growth habit and appearance to 'Orion Red', with large, medium-red bracts and dark green foliage. Early Orion shows color and could be shipped 5-7 days earlier than Orion Red. However, timing of cyathia development is similar for the two cultivars. In the trials, Early



Left to right: 'Autumn Red' (*Ecke*); 'Cortez Electric Fire' (*Fischer*); 'Christmas Poem' (*Selecta First Class*); 'Christmas Spirit 2' (*Selecta First Class*).



Left to right: 'Early Orion' (*Fischer*); 'Pink Elf' (*Fischer*); 'Shimmer Pink' (*Ecke*); 'Premium Hot Pink' (*Dummen*).



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Orion produced slightly fewer cyathia than did Orion Red.

PINK CULTIVARS

'Pink Elf' (Fischer USA). This new pink is similar to 'Red Elf' in terms of growth habit, earliness, bract shape and display. Like most dark-

leaf varieties, the pink color is not great. Older bracts are lighter; younger bracts have a darker pink color. This cultivar is useful because of the need for pink in the earliest markets.

'Premium Hot Pink' (Dummen USA). This cultivar is the best of the

Premium colors with dark rosy-pink bracts that are held horizontal to upright. The older bracts are uniformly colored, and the foliage is dark green. This cultivar matches the others in the series for height but flowered later. This cultivar is an excellent compact dark pink.

JINGLE BELLS CULTIVARS

'Shimmer Pink' (Ecke Ranch). This is an excellent new novelty cultivar that finishes before Thanksgiving. The upright bracts are a bright, medium pink with distinctive white flecks that are ▶



Left to right: 'Winterfest Jingle' (Oglevee); 'Premium Marble' (Dummen); 'Limelight' (Dummen); 'Premium Apricot' (Dummen).



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colorful and attractive; studies have found that consumers will pay a higher price for this plant. The foliage is dark green, but the plant is more sensitive to Botrytis than most other dark green cultivars. Typical of this type of cultivar, growers will experience a significant amount of sports; however, all plants should be salable. This is not a strong-growing plant; consider using rings or other support. In warm climates it is important to prevent it from getting soft. It has less vigor and is more responsive to growth regulators than Freedom; however, Shimmer Pink can stretch under warm conditions without growth regulators. Growers with high-end markets should definitely try this variety; mass-market growers should think carefully.

'Winterfest Jingle' (Oglevee Ltd.). This cultivar has medium-red bracts with pink flecks and dark green foliage that is strikingly shiny. Transition bracts are large and obvious with green edges. It is well matched to the Winterfest series.

MARBLE CULTIVARS

'Premium Marble' (Dummen USA). Bracts have a medium-pink center and creamy white edges, with very dark green foliage. In all trials, the bracts were rolled down at the edges and did not flatten out like others in the Premium series. Well matched to the rest of the series for height and flowering date; however, older bracts soon developed a greenish cast in the greenhouse. This cultivar is useful for growers producing the Premium series.

NOVELTY CULTIVARS

'Limelight' (Dummen USA). Contorted, creamy white bracts with a yellowish green color are the same shape as 'Avant Garde' or 'Strawberries and Cream'. Not really dark green flowers but few plants listed as such truly are. Many of the plants had one or more branches with normal appearing bracts. Lower than average vigor, with midseason finish. Truly funky and different. Great conversation plant that fits the lime green trend in home decor.

'Premium Apricot' (Dummen USA). The large, flat older bracts are a creamy white with pink veins, and younger bracts have an attractive light pink cast. No other currently available cultivars have this appearance. This cultivar is well matched to the rest of the series for height and flowering date. However, plants did not age well in the greenhouse, as the older bracts soon developed a greenish cast.

'Twister' (Dummen USA). This is a midseason cultivar with curled leaves and bracts similar to Winter Rose. The bract color is light red with slightly lighter green and smaller foliage and smaller bracts than 'Winter Rose Dark



Top to bottom: 'Twister' (Dummen); 'Winterfest Coral' (Oglevee); 'Winter Rose Early Red' (Ecke); 'Merry Christmas 2' (Selecta First Class).

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Silverstar White (Fischer)

Red'. Twister has larger centers with more cyathia and produces more lateral branches than Winter Rose Dark Red.

'Winterfest Coral' (Oglevee Ltd.).

This cultivar has unusual, large, dark-pink bracts with a slightly orange cast, and the foliage is dark green and shiny. As with others in this series, the transition bracts are large and obvious with green edges. It is well matched to the Winterfest series.

'Winter Rose Early' (Ecke). A good addition to the Winter Rose series. It has positive series characteristics: strong stems and color, dark green foliage and excellent shelf life. This cultivar's important features are that it flowers at least one week earlier than Winter Rose Dark Red, produces more axillary shoots and has more uniform growth than Dark Red. It is less vigorous than Dark Red and will need additional crop time and less growth regulator. With its better branching and lower vigor, Florel probably will not be needed with Winter Rose Early.

PEPPERMINT CULTIVARS

'Merry Christmas 2' (Selecta First Class). This peppermint finishes early and is a good addition to this color class. It has dark green foliage with uniform growth habit, is low to medium vigor and seems easy to produce. In the trials, the bract color was slightly more uniform than 'Da Vinci' but not as nice as 'Christmas Candy'. This cultivar scored well in consumer preference surveys.

WHITE CULTIVARS

'Improved Silverstar White' (Fischer USA). Creamy white, horizontal bracts with a green tint. The light green foliage has an

interesting grayish cast and narrow but bright-white edges. This new selection may be more uniform and vigorous with better color than previous selections; still not as good as others in the Silverstar series. GPN

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tion about the National Poinsettia Trials, go to www.poinsettia-trial.org.

Poinsettia trial coverage continues next month with the consumer interest survey, conducted by all three universities for the first time.