



'Christmas Day'



'Christmas Season Marble'

New Poinsettia Varieties for 2011

By John Dole and Jim Barrett

Which introductions will you add to your poinsettia program this year?

This year 18 new cultivars were introduced in the National Poinsettia Trials conducted at Homewood Nursery in Raleigh, N.C., North Carolina State University (NCSU) and the University of Florida (UF) in cooperation with the poinsettia breeder companies. These cultivars should be available in 2011 — however, not all new cultivars are listed in the breeder company catalogs. Contact your supplier if you see one you want to try, but it is not listed yet.

Considering the movement of the consumer market back towards red in the last few years, it should be no surprise that most of the new cultivars are red. Of the non-red cultivars, several were major improvements of older cultivars and two were significant new cultivars.

Red Cultivars

'Bravo' (Dümmen). This cultivar had large bracts with a rounded shape. Color was medium red and bracts were held flat but drooped with age. The young bracts were dark red and some expanded below the older bracts, which produced a non-uniform appearance. Branch structure and plant habit were similar to Premium Red. Vigor was low to medium.

'Christmas Beauty' (Selecta/Ball). 'Christmas Beauty' was distinctive for its rounded medium-red bracts with smooth edges. Branch development was uniform. The low to medium vigor plants flowered midseason. The plants had strong, thick stems and habit was a nice uniform round shape. This cultivar has performed well in UF post-production trials. 'Christmas Beauty' has a lot of potential and should work well in small to medium-sized container sizes with very little PGR needed.

'Christmas Day' (Selecta/Ball). 'Christmas Day' has strong stems and a nice upright growth habit. In terms of plant structure it may be closer to 'Prestige Red' than any other cultivar. Plants had very uniform breaking. The rounded, medium-red bracts were held flat and the young bracts were dark red. The medium vigor plants flowered midseason. Plants should work well in a wide range of container sizes.

'Christmas Season Fire' (Selecta/Ball). This cultivar has medium-sized bracts with a nice bright red color, which was slightly more orange in good light, but difficult to tell apart from 'Christmas Season Red'. Fire has large distinctive cyathia and the bracts are slightly more rounded than 'Christmas Season Red'.

Branching was excellent and plants were uniform and moderately upright. The medium vigor plants are lower vigor than 'Christmas Season Red' and flowered early to midseason. Foliage was dark green. Plants should work well in most container sizes.

'Encore' (Dümmen). Encore had bright-red bracts with dark-red young bracts. The long, pointed bracts were held flat to slightly upright, allowing for easy sleeving. In warm climates, bract edges may roll under slightly. Centers contained a large number of small cyathia. Branch strength was good and plant habit was slightly spreading. The medium vigor plants flowered midseason. Plants should work well in most container sizes.

'Infinity Fire' (Dümmen). While similar to 'Infinity Red' in overall shape and upright branching pattern, the bracts of Fire are slightly darker, with a little more orange than blue cast. However, without a side-by-side comparison with 'Infinity Red', it would be hard to tell the two apart. The big difference is in timing — 'Infinity Fire' is much later, reaching first color and flowering at least two weeks after 'Infinity Red' at NCSU. The medium to high vigor plants have dark-green foliage. Plants should work best in medium to large container sizes.



'Encore'



'Red Glitter'



'Premium Ice Crystal'



'Mars Red '09'

'Jubilee Red' (Ecke). The important feature of 'Jubilee Red' was that plants flowered exactly between 'Prestige Early Red' and 'Prestige Red' at NCSU — as intended. In UF studies, 'Jubilee Red' has shown to be potentially important in the warmest production areas as a replacement for 'Freedom Red' because it has stronger stems and does not stretch as much. Also, in hot, "heat delay" conditions, 'Jubilee Red' flowers with Freedom and is not delayed like Prestige Early. Compared to 'Freedom Red' bracts are slightly smaller have a medium-red color. The younger bracts tend to lay flat while the older bracts hang down, producing the ball of red effect. Plants have medium vigor with uniform branching and shoot growth. In post-production, 'Jubilee Red' is similar to Freedom and may show physical rubbing injury ("bruising") and youngest bracts can fade if plants are shipped too early. 'Jubilee Red' should work well in a variety of container sizes.

'Mars Red '09' (Syngenta). 'Mars Red '09' has the same medium-sized, slightly upright bracts and upright, uniform plant habit that characterizes the Mars series. This selection was introduced for the improved richer red color. Unfortunately, 'Mars Red '09' flowers later than the original (it was one of the latest reds at NCSU and UF) and is later than the Mars colors. Additionally, it is more vigorous than the original and requires more PGR for size control. One interesting characteristic is that the inflorescence tends to be more elongated than the original with long internodes in between each bract, opening up the inflorescence. This was most apparent on larger pots more than small pots — heavy PGR applications will prevent this. The trial results show that 'Mars Red '09' works well for late-finishing larger plants.

'Noel' (Selecta/Ball). The bright-red bracts were held in tight clusters and the young bracts were dark red. Plants have noticeably large cyathia. The plants were medium to low vigor at NCSU but higher vigor elsewhere. Plants had good branching and strong stems. Plant habit

'Sonora White Glitter'



was not as upright as 'Christmas Day'. Flowering was early to mid-season. Plants will work well for small to medium size pots, but have stem strength and vigor for larger pots with adequate weeks of growth, especially in cooler climates.

'Protégé' (Dümmen). The plants were medium to high vigor and flowered mid to late season. A few years back, late season would have been mid December, but now with many growers any time after Thanksgiving counts as late, which was the case with 'Protégé'. The medium-red bracts were held flat to upright. In Florida, this cultivar had more bract edge burn than would be desired.

'Vintage Red' (Selecta/Ball). This cultivar had medium-red bracts with darker red young bracts. The bracts have the classic oak-leaf shape with points on the edges, but this characteristic was less pronounced in Florida. The bracts started out horizontal but drooped with age, producing the ball of red effect. Plants were fairly uniform with good breaking and strong stems. Plant habit is less upright than 'Christmas Day'. Finish is mid-season and 'Vintage Red' should work in a range of sizes.

White Cultivars

'Christmas Season White' (Selecta). This cultivar has medium-sized creamy white bracts with large distinctive cyathia. Bracts are slightly elongated like other colors in this series. Compared with 'Christmas Season

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Red', this cultivar showed first color a week later and flowered a full two weeks later. In addition, White was more compact, had thinner stems and was less upright than Red. Branching was good



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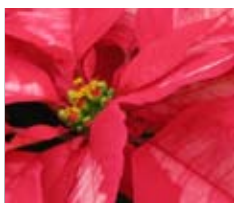
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and plants were uniform. The medium to low vigor plants flowered mid to late season. This cultivar may work best in smaller containers sizes.

Pink Cultivars

'Christmas Season Pink' (Selecta). As with 'Christmas Season White', 'Christmas Season Pink' showed color a week after Red but flowered only a couple days after Red. 'Christmas Season Pink' has medium-pink bracts with slightly darker young bracts and has good color for a dark-leaf cultivar. Plants were well branched and full. Growth habit and vigor are similar to the Red and the cultivar should work well in most containers sizes.

'Infinity Pink' (Dümmen). One of the nicest pinks in the trial this year, the medium-pink bracts turned more salmon color as they aged, rather than grayish as with many other pink cultivars. The bract veins were darker pink and there was some ruffling. The flat to upright bracts surrounded small cyathia clusters. The medium to high vigor plants flower midseason, similar to 'Infinity Red'. Plants should work best in medium to large container sizes.

Novelty Cultivars

'Christmas Season Marble' (Selecta/Ball). Marble is quite similar to Red in growth habit and vigor but, as with White and Pink, showed first color later than Red. Final flowering was only a couple of days after Red at NCSU. The bracts are creamy white with a medium-pink blaze. There was good contrast between the pink and the white margin, and this is now one of the marble varieties with the best contrasting colors in the bracts. The medium to high vigor plants flowered midseason. This cultivar should work well in most containers sizes.


'Premium Ice Crystal' (Dümmen). Another great addition to the Premium series and is an important novelty, Ice Crystal has large rosy red bracts with pale pink to apricot centers spotted in red. The pattern appears to be quite uniform — growers who produced large numbers noted no or few reversions. The medium to low vigor plants are typical of the series, producing the classic ball of color. Branching was excellent and foliage dark green. Ice Crystal should be adaptable to most container sizes by adjusting the schedule and plant growth regular applications. Plants flowered midseason. Growers who are not familiar with the Premium series should be aware of the low vigor and sensitivity to PGRs and avoid producing plants that are too short. *Note: 'Premium Ice Crystal' was released two years ago but this was the first year it was officially entered in the National Poinsettia Trial Program.*

'Red Glitter' (Ecke). 'Red Glitter' is an important addition

'Christmas Season Pink'
'Christmas Season White'

to the jingle group — it has brick red bracts with bold white spots and splashes. 'Red Glitter' has excellent stem strength and a more upright plant habit than other jingle cultivars. As with other jingle cultivars, a number of plants had branches or individual bracts sporting to white. However, all of the plants are marketable. Bracts are flat to upright and foliage is very dark green.

Plant vigor seems to vary from low-medium in most regions to medium-high in warmer climates. A weakness of 'Red Glitter' is that it colored and flowered late and was probably a week later than Shimmer Surprise. Plants are very uniform with excellent breaking. 'Red Glitter' should work well in most container sizes, including those with multiple plants per container. Performance in post-production trials at UF was excellent.

'Sonora White Glitter' (Improved) (Syn-genta). 'Sonora White Glitter' has the same great color pattern of its predecessor — medium red with white spots and splashes. As many consumers have told us over the years, one characteristic they liked about White Glitter is that the green leaves tend to be intermingled with the bracts, producing a new red, white and green effect. This newer version is intended to be earlier flowering, have more uniform breaking, and have a more stable color pattern; reversions will still occur but will produce whites instead of tending towards marble. We noticed the more uniform breaking and that the plants colored up and were marketable earlier. However, plants flowered about the same time as the previous selection, which is early December. Unfortunately, with a limited number of plants it is hard to see a change in reversion percentages. 

John Dole is professor of horticultural science at North Carolina State University. Jim Barrett is professor of horticulture at University of Florida. Dole can be reached at john_dole@ncsu.edu, and Barrett can be reached at jbarrett@ufl.edu.



'Infinity Fire'



'Jubilee Red'