



Consumers Evaluate Poinsettia Varieties

Find out how consumers rank the latest poinsettia cultivars

By Jim Barrett and John Dole

The National Poinsettia Trials are primarily directed at generating production information on newer cultivars for growers and breeder companies. However, each of the trial locations gathers data on consumer reactions to the cultivars. This information can be very useful for growers and retailers in making decisions on their cultivar mix.

There were 107 cultivars in the trial this year, which was conducted at Homewood Nursery in Raleigh, at North Carolina State University (NCSU) and at the University of Florida (UF). The trials are sponsored and supported by the major breeder companies Syngenta, Selecta/Ball, Ecke and Dümmen. The plants shown to the public are grown at those trial locations. The 1,271 participants, a majority of which were female, were not given any incentives to vote in the surveys.

At Homewood a single plant of 41 cultivars were displayed in the retail area from Nov. 20 through Dec. 17. Each plant was

identified only by a number. Customers were asked to select their five favorites without ranking them and a total of 624 surveys were completed.

At NCSU plants were displayed indoors under fluorescent lighting and were labeled by name. Plants were set up in six categories: red, white, pink, marble, peppermint and novelty. Participants were asked to select their three favorite plants from each of the six groups. Also, they were asked to choose their three overall favorites. This year NCSU produced several combination containers with three different varieties and participants selected the three of those they liked the most. NCSU results are from 145 completed surveys.

At UF, surveys were completed by 502 visitors to the UF Poinsettia Show and Sale on Dec. 9 and 10. The survey had six questions, as indicated in the tables below, and each question was set out on a greenhouse bench. A single plant of each variety was shown, and plants were only



Table 1 Overall selections at Homewood and NCSU

Ranking	NCSU	Homewood
1	'Ice Punch'	'Ice Punch'
2	'Chianti'	'Ice Crystal'
3	'Christmas Feelings Red Cinnamon'	'Ruby Frost'
4	'Orange Spice'	'Sonora White Glitter'
5	'Red Glitter'	'Winter Rose Early Red'
6	'Winter Rose Early Red'	'Chianti'
7	'Premium Picasso'	'Red Glitter'
8	RF 0914 (Dümmen)	'Premium Picasso'
9	'Ruby Frost'	1454 (Dümmen)
10	'Polly's Pink'	'White Christmas'

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Table 2 NCSU selections by color and class

Pink	Rank
'Mars Pink'	1
'Premium Lipstick Pink'	2
'Sonora Pink'	3
White	
'Premium Polar'	1
'Polar Bear'	2
'Wintersun'	3
Marble	
'Winter Blush'	1
'Sonora Marble'	2
'Infinity Marble'	3
Red	
RF 0914 (Dümmen)	1
'Prestige Early Red'	2
'Christmas Eve'	3
'Christmas Feelings Merlot'	4
I230 (Ecke)	5T
'Jubilee Red'	5T
Peppermint	
'Christmas Feelings Red Cinnamon'	1
'Pink Candy'	2
'Marco Polo'	3
Novelty	
'Chianti'	1
'Winter Rose Early Red'	2
'Ice Punch'	3
Combination Pots	
Classic Red and Classic White	1
Cortez Burgundy and White	2
'Christmas Eve', 'Wintersun' and 'Pink Candy'	3

identified by a number.

Red cultivars dominate the poinsettia market. Consumers can look at red plants and determine which they prefer as seen in Tables 2 and 3. However, the results for the red question at UF (Table 3) show that the votes were spread across several cultivars without a single strong leader. It is an observation over the years at UF that many consumers like almost all of the red plants and only select individual favorites because we force them to do that with the question.

Table 1, which is the highest ranking overall selection by participants at NCSU and

Table 3 UF Participants were shown 10 red plants and asked to select their favorite three plants

Cultivar	% of times selected
'Novia Red'	16
'Orion'	15
'Christmas Feelings Merlot'	12
'Premium Red'	11
'Chianti'	11
'Early Glory'	11
'Prestige Red'	10
'Cortez'	9
'Mira Red'	4

Table 4 UF Participants were shown 10 plants representing different colors and types of poinsettias and were asked to select their favorite three plants

Cultivar	% of times selected
'Sonora White Glitter Early'	23
'Premium Picasso'	15
'Winter Rose Early Red'	13
'Classic White'	10
'Christmas Season Fire'	8
'Polly's Pink'	7
'Christmas Angel Marbella'	7
'Viking'	7
'Marco Polo'	6
'Silverstar Marble'	6

Homewood, and Table 4, which represents different colors and types at UF, show the relative strength of the novelty cultivars with the participants in these surveys. The individuals who participate are a good representation of markets where larger plant size, novelty and newer cultivars have strong appeal.

For the overall favorites at NCSU and Homewood (Table 1) there were five cultivars ranked in the top 10 at both locations. These were 'Ice Punch', 'Chianti', 'Red Glitter', 'Premium Picasso' and 'Winter Rose Early Red'. None of these are traditional red plants, but notice that all are novelty with red color. You can see the appeal of red in novelty cultivars in the individual novelty selections at NCSU (Table 2) and at UF (Tables 4 and 5).

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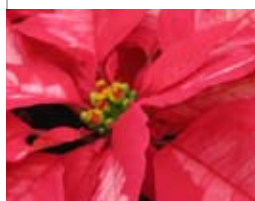
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Table 5 UF Participants were shown 10 different novelty plants and asked to select their favorite three plants

Cultivar	% of times selected
'Ice Punch'	22
'Carousel Dark Red'	13
'Ruby Frost'	11
'Red Glitter'	11
'Cortez Burgundy'	9
'Tapestry'	9
'Orange Spice'	9
'Winter Rose Early Red'	9
'Visions of Grandeur'	8
Christmas Feelings Cinnamon	4

Table 6 UF Participants were shown five different white plants and asked to select their one favorite

Cultivar	% of times selected
'Polar Bear'	32
'Whitestar'	28
'Mars White'	18
'Premium Polar'	16
'Cortez White'	7

The jingle bell-type novelty cultivars are an interesting group — most growers dislike them but many consumers really like them. As has been common in past surveys the jingle bell cultivars are among the highest rated plants. Two new varieties are 'Red Glitter', a very strong plant, and

Table 7 UF Participants were shown three different Jingle Bell type plants and asked to select their one favorite


Cultivar	% of times selected
'Sonora White Glitter Early'	64
'Red Glitter' (39-02B)	25
'Shimmer Surprise'	12

Table 8 UF Participants were shown these four novelty cultivars and were asked to select their one favorite

Cultivar	% of times selected
'Ice Punch'	62
'Ruby Frost'	13
'Monet Twilight'	13
'Ice Crystal'	12

'Sonora White Glitter Early', an earlier and more uniform selection. These cultivars were described in the February *GPN* article on new cultivars. At UF when shown three important cultivars, the consumers showed a preference for 'Sonora White Glitter Early' (Table 7). When asked why, they would refer to slightly brighter colors or the unique transition bracts.

'Ice Punch' was the strongest novelty at all three locations this year and has generally held that position for the past two to three years. At Homewood, 'Ice Crystal' was a close second and is the cultivar that comes closest to the general appearance of 'Ice Punch'. In a direct comparison of four important novelties at UF (Table 8), 'Ice Punch' was selected by a large majority of the participants. Individuals selecting 'Ice Punch' might refer to the bright reddish pink color or general

appearance of the bracts. Most individuals like 'Ice Crystal' and it is an important cultivar. Those that selected it usually indicated they liked the appearance of the bracts and the uniform plant. 



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