

Picking Popular Poinsettias

Find out if the poinsettias you are growing or plan to grow will be popular with consumers.

By John Dole, Jim Barrett and Allen Hammer

If only we knew what consumers wanted. Imagine being able to order and grow only the cultivars needed in the quantities required. Since that isn't possible, we try to do the next best thing — decide what the consumers want through marketing surveys. In this year's National Poinsettia Trials we evaluated more than 120 poinsettia cultivars from five companies. All four trial locations, White River Gardens/Purdue University, University of Florida, North Carolina State University and Homewood Nursery and Garden Center, conducted marketing surveys with attendees.

THE TRIALS

Because each trial is set up differently, we wanted to give you a brief overview of each one before moving on to the results. Please be aware that different data were collected at each trial, as this might impact how closely the results can be compared.

University of Florida. At the University of Florida the consumer open house was held on Dec. 9, 2004 in the greenhouse where the plants were set up for the grower field day. That day, the undergraduate students sold plants they grew, and many of the consumers came planning to

purchase them. There were approximately 450 attendees, and 328 useable surveys were collected. For the first three questions, represented in Figures 1-3, right, individual plants were placed on a separate bench without names. For the fourth question, represented by Figure 4, page 34, participants selected their favorites from the variety trial where four plants of each variety were lined up in a row with the name of the variety.

Purdue University. For the Purdue consumer survey, plants were moved to White River Gardens in Indianapolis, Ind., and shown in a conservatory greenhouse there on (DATE). There were approximately 1,050 participants in the survey. Results are shown in Figures 5-7, page 34. Appreciation is expressed to the staff of White River Gardens for their support and cooperation in conducting this survey.

Homewood Nursery and Garden Center. Forty cultivars were placed on display in the garden center in Raleigh, N.C., and customers were asked to select their five favorites without ranking them. More than 700 votes were received, and results are shown in Figure 8, page 36.

North Carolina State University. The North Carolina State University survey is conducted at a Consumer Open House on Sunday after the grower day on (Dec. 2, 2004). The plants



Consumers evaluating poinsettias at the NC State Open House (Photo courtesy of John Dole)

Figure 1. University of Florida Favorite Red Cultivars. Participants were shown 10 red plants that were not marked with names and asked to pick the ones they would buy if purchasing three plants.

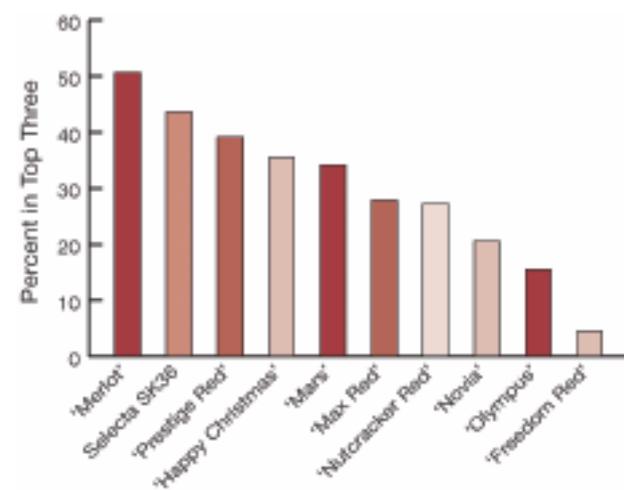


Figure 2. University of Florida Color and Style Preference. Participants were shown 10 plants, without names, which represented different colors and styles of poinsettias. They were asked to pick the ones they would buy if purchasing three plants.

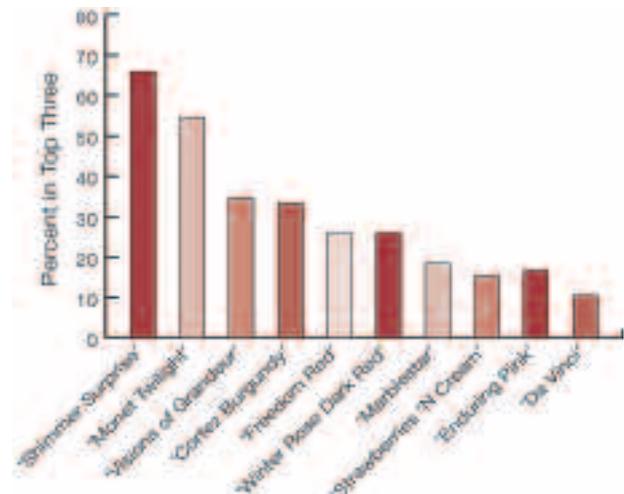
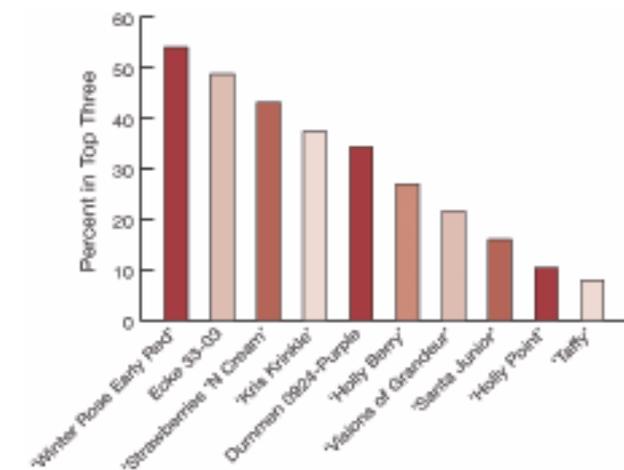


Figure 3. University of Florida Favorite Novelty Cultivars. Participants were shown 10 novelty plants, without names. They were asked to pick the ones they would buy if purchasing three plants.



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were moved to a display area in the JC Raulston Arboretum and shown with names. There were 250 attendees and 178 useable surveys. The consumers were asked to select their three favorite cultivars within each of eight groups of cultivars: overall favorite and favorite within color groupings of red, pink, white, jingle bells, marble and novelties. Results, as shown in Figures 9 and 10, pages 36 and 38, are the top five or 10 choices in each group.

WHAT CONSUMERS TOLD US

Consumers at all of the trials love 'Monet Twilight' and 'Cortez Burgundy'. Both cultivars have been available for a couple years now and have become established favorites.

Figure 4. University of Florida Overall Favorite Cultivars. Participants were asked to select their favorite 10 plants from those in the variety trial. Plants did have names.

Ranking	Cultivar	Percent selecting the variety in their top 10
1	'Monet Twilight'	53
2	'Cortez Burgundy'	39
3	'Sonora White Glitter'	36
4	'Marblestar'	35
5	'Merlot'	34
6	'Kris Krinkle'	29
7 (tie)	'Carousel Pink'	28
7 (tie)	'Winter Rose Dark Red'	28
9	'Visions of Grandeur'	27
10	'Shimmer Surprise'	26
11	'Cortez Electric Fire'	23
12	'Chianti'	20
13 (tie)	'Strawberries 'N Cream'	19
13 (tie)	'Happy Christmas'	19
13 (tie)	'Max Red'	19

'Monet Twilight' and 'Cortez Burgundy' are now perennial favorites, scoring well in consumer trials ever since they were introduced. In fact, at the University of Florida, 'Monet Twilight' and 'Cortez Burgundy' were the top two cultivars when participants were asked to choose among all the cultivars. Obviously, any grower focusing on novelties would want to grow these cultivars.

Surprisingly, two new cultivars took the "top prize" in three of our surveys: 'Shimmer Surprise' and 'Visions of Grandeur'. 'Shimmer Surprise' received the most votes at Homewood and in one of the studies at the University of Florida. 'Shimmer Surprise' is a

Figure 6. Purdue University Overall Favorite Cultivar. Participants were asked to select which plant they would buy from all the cultivars with names.

Ranking	Cultivar	Percent selecting as first choice
1	'Sonora White Glitter'	8.7
2	'Visions of Grandeur'	5.9
3	'Merlot'	4.4
4	'Monet Twilight'	3.3
5	'Holly Berry'	2.8
6 (tie)	'Carousel Pink'	2.5
6 (tie)	'Orion Red'	2.5
8	'Mars'	2.3
9 (tie)	'Cinnamon Star'	2.1
9 (tie)	'White Christmas'	2.1
11	'Kris Krinkle'	1.9
12	'Olympus'	1.8
13 (tie)	'Strawberries 'N Cream'	1.7
13 (tie)	'Twister'	1.7
15 (tie)	'Chianti'	1.6
15 (tie)	'Cortez Electric Fire'	1.6

Figure 5. Purdue University Favorite Red Cultivars. Participants were shown the indicated cultivars, which were not named, and asked to select which one they liked best.

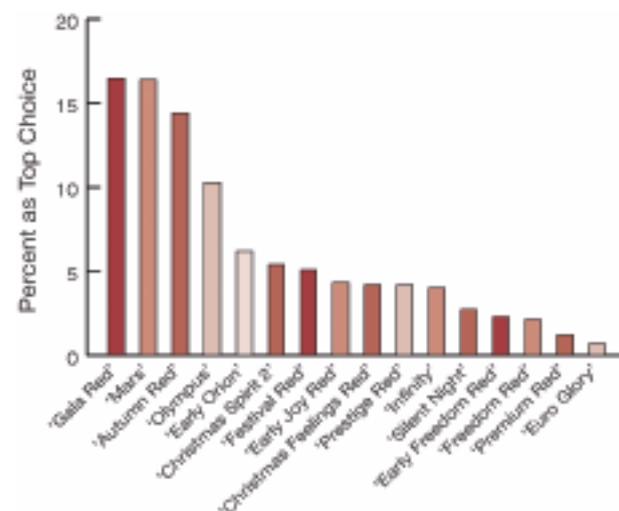
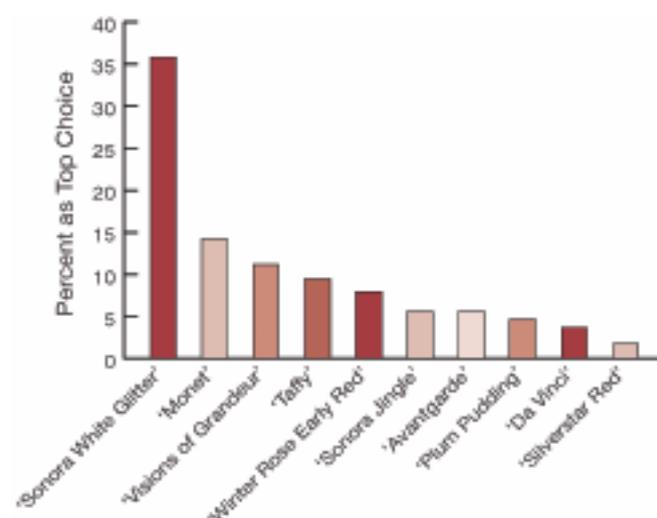


Figure 7. Purdue University Favorite Novelty Cultivars. Participants were asked to select the plant they would buy from these novelty cultivars. The plants were not named.



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striking combination of large white and pink patches and spots on bright red bracts. In addition to ranking high overall, it also ranked as one of the top five favorite jingle bells types at NC State. 'Visions of Grandeur' was the winner at NC State and number two for Purdue University. 'Visions of Grandeur' is equally striking, with large, upright, pale pink bracts that darken as they age. While we placed Visions in the novelty section, it could have been placed with the pinks and would have attracted attention there as well. 'Visions of Grandeur' also ranked a respectable number 13

in Homewood's trials and number nine among all the cultivars at the University of Florida.

Of course, the problem with poinsettia surveys is that while consumers tend to vote for the striking and unusual, they tend to purchase red. If given a choice, 'Merlot' would be the red poinsettia that many of our consumers would buy, or at least that's what our surveys reveal. 'Merlot' has dark-red bracts with even darker young bracts, which makes this cultivar really stand out. 'Merlot' was the highest ranked red at University of Florida, number two at NC State, number three at Purdue University and number 17 at Homewood.

Figure 8. Retail survey of select cultivars at Homewood Nursery & Garden Center. Forty poinsettias were displayed, each identified by a number. Customers were asked to select their five favorites without ranking them; not all customers chose five. No incentives were offered to customers for voting. Results were based on 721 votes.

Ranking	Cultivar	Votes	Ranking	Cultivar	Votes
1	'Shimmer Surprise'	352	21	'Kris Krinkle'	73
2	'Monet Twilight'	314	22	'Christmastime Marble'	71
3	'Plum Pudding'	175	23	'Gala Red'	62
4	'Novia'	165	24 (tie)	V-119B (Ecke)	60
5	'Winter Rose Early Red'	150	24 (tie)	'Christmas Dream White Sparkle'	60
6	'Cortez Burgundy'	147	26	'Jester Red'	59
7	'Santa Claus Pink'	137	27	'Hollyberry'	55
8	'Sonora White Glitter'	134	28	'Avantgarde'	48
9	'Strawberries 'N Cream'	121	29	'Shimmer Pink'	46
10	'Snowcap'	116	30	'Taffy'	44
11	'Chianti'	108	31	'Silverstar Marble'	41
12	71-02 (Ecke)	101	32	'Elegance Pink'	39
13 (tie)	'Christmas Star'	95	33	'Amazone Peppermint'	35
13 (tie)	'Olympus'	95	34	'Hollypoint'	31
13 (tie)	'Visions of Grandeur'	95	35	'Cortez Dark Red'	29
16	'Winter Rose Early Pink'	87	36	'Christmastime Crazy'	27
17	'Independence Red'	83	37	'Cortez Hot Pink'	20
18	'Cortez Electric Fire'	80	38	'Silverstar Red'	19
19	'Merlot'	75	39	'Da Vinci'	18
20	'Christmas Bells'	74			

Interestingly, while most poinsettia cultivars have dark-red bracts, 'Happy Christmas' with its bright orange-red bracts attracted a lot of attention. Among reds, 'Happy Christmas' placed number three at NC State and number four at University of Florida. Another cultivar with orange-red bracts, 'Cortez Electric Fire', also placed well in the trials.

Overall, other highly ranked reds among all the cultivars at University of Florida were 'Chianti' (number 12) and 'Max Red' (number 15), and among just the reds were Selecta SK36 (number two), 'Prestige Red' (number three) and 'Mars' (number five). For White River Gardens/Purdue University the highest reds were 'Orion Red' (number six), 'Mars' (number eight) and 'Chianti' (number 14) and among just the reds were 'Gala Red' (number one), 'Mars' (number two), 'Autumn Red' (number

Figure 9. North Carolina State Overall Preferences. Participants were shown all cultivars, which were named, and asked to select their three favorite cultivars. Responses were either for all cultivars (overall) or for specific cultivar groups (by color).

Cultivar	Ranking
'Visions of Grandeur'	1
'Monet Twilight'	2
Dümmen 10306-RF2423	3
'Cortez Burgundy'	4
Oglevee PX 12004	5 (tie)
'Sonora Jingle'	5 (tie)
'Puebla'	7
'Santa Claus Marble'	8 (tie)
'Santa Claus White'	8 (tie)
'Silverstar Marble'	8 (tie)

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Figure 10. North Carolina State Favorite Colors. Participants were shown all cultivars, which were named, and asked to select their three favorite cultivars. Responses were either for all cultivars (overall) or for specific cultivar groups (by color).

RED	
Cultivar	Ranking
Dümmen 10306-RF2423	1
'Merlot'	2
'Happy Christmas'	3 (tie)
'Prestige Red'	3 (tie)
'Sonora Dark Red'	3 (tie)
'Chianti Red'	6
'Cortez Dark Red'	7
Dümmen 10303-RF0775	8
'Red Elf'	9
'Novia'	10

PINK	
Cultivar	Ranking
'Christmas Feelings Pink'	1
'Santa Claus Pink'	2
'Early Joy Pink'	3
'Maren'	4
'Mirage'	5

WHITE	
Cultivar	Ranking
'Santa Claus White'	1
'Arctic White'	2
'Snowcap'	3

MARBLE	
Cultivar	Ranking
'Silverstar Marble'	1
'Puebla'	2
'Santa Claus Marble'	3
'Holly Berry'	4
'Christmas Feelings Marble 2'	5

JINGLE	
Cultivar	Ranking
'Sonora Jingle'	1
Oglevee PX 12004	2
'Shimmer Surprise'	3
'Christmas Dream White Sparkle'	4
'Sonora White Glitter'	5

NOVELTY	
Cultivar	Ranking
'Visions of Grandeur'	1
'Monet Twilight'	2
'Cortez Burgundy'	3
'Winter Rose Dark Red'	4
'Plum Pudding'	5

three), 'Olympus' (number four) and 'Early Orion' (number five). At Homewood 'Novia' (number four), 'Chianti' (number 11), 'Christmas Star' (number 13), 'Olympus' (number 13 tie) and 'Independence Red' (number 15) placed high. For NC State the highest red cultivars overall were Dümmen 10306-RF2423 (number three), a trial cultivar, and 'Cortez Dark Red' (number 12). When only red cultivars were compared, the most popular cultivars were Dümmen 10306-RF2423 (number one), 'Prestige Red' (number three, tie) and 'Sonora Dark Red' (number three, tie). 

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A Growing Trend

Like it or not, painted poinsettias are here to stay. One of the few trends we see across the board at retail is the overwhelming popularity of painted poinsettias. Garden centers just could not keep them in stock last year. So if you are thinking about trying your hand at painting this year or you want to perfect your techniques, below are some suggestions from Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., the marketers of Fantasy Colors spray dyes for poinsettias. Many growers are charging a premium for painted poinsettias.

- Fantasy Colors do not affect the shelf life of poinsettias.

- White, cream, apricot, light pink and marble colored poinsettias work best for painting.

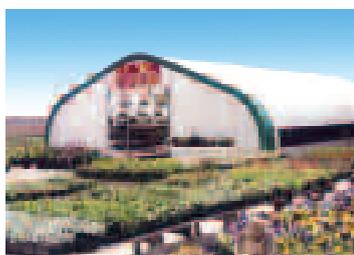
- Fantasy Colors is available in apricot, yellow, light yellow, blue, plum, orange, turquoise, dark rose, lilac and fuchsia.

- For best results, spray only dry plants from a distance of 8-12 inches and let dry approximately 15-20 minutes before applying a second coat or color.

Gloeckner has developed recipes with step-by-step instructions for making 17 exciting patterns. These recipes plus additional tips for success can be downloaded at www.fredgloeckner.com.

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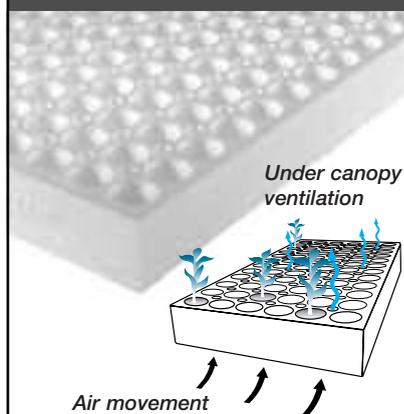


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