

Consumer Poinsettia Picks

Find out if the poinsettias you are growing or plan to grow will be popular with consumers through this annual consumer preference report.

By Jim Barrett, Allen Hammer and John Dole

The National Poinsettia Variety Trials evaluate the newest varieties to provide growers with information on how to produce them and compare them with older standard varieties, which you can find in the February 2004 issue of *GPN*. These trials are held at the University of Florida, Purdue University and North Carolina State University. Each year we take advantage of the trials to show the varieties to consumers to give us information on what they think about the varieties.

University of Florida. At the University of Florida, the consumer open house is held in the greenhouse where the plants are grown on a Thursday after the grower field day. That day, the undergraduate students sell the plants they grew, and many of the consumers come planning to purchase plants. There were ▶

Figure 1. There were 110 varieties in the trial and four plants of each displayed with names. The participants were asked to pick their favorite 10 varieties. These are the 10 top varieties and the percentage of participants selecting it. There were 282 completed surveys for this question.

FLORIDA OVERALL FAVORITES		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Monet Twilight	51
2	Cortez Burgundy	40
3	Winter Rose Dark Red	30
4	Marblestar	29
5	Jingle Bells 3	28
6	Merlot	24
7	Plum Pudding	22
8	Snowberry Punch	21
9	Holly Point	20
10	Cortez Electric Fire	19

Figure 2. The consumers were shown 10 red poinsettias and were asked which three they might purchase. Results are the percent of participants who selected each plant in

FLORIDA FAVORITE REDS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Mars	14
2	Merlot	14
3	Success	14
4	Cortez Electric Fire	12
5	Early Joy Red	9
6	Christmas Spirit	9
7	Premium Red	8
8	Freedom Red	7
9	Ecke 1055	7
10	Jester Red	6

Figure 3. Participants were shown 12 novelty varieties and asked to select the three they might purchase. Results are the

FLORIDA FAVORITE NOVELTIES		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Ecke 54-99 R&W	21
2	Strawberries n Cream	15
3	Winter Rose Early	11
4	Carousel Red	11
5	Plum Pudding	10
6	Holly Point	9
7	Premium Hot Pink	5
8	Carousel Pink	5
9	Limelight	3
10	Winter Rose White	2

Figure 4. The participants were shown these eight jingle bell-type varieties and asked if they liked this type of plant. Those who responded yes (82 percent) were then asked to select the one plant they might buy.

FLORIDA JINGLE BELL FAVORITES		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Ecke 54-99 R&W	54
2	Sonora White Glitter	25
3	Sonora Jingle	5
4	Winterfest Jingle	5
5	Shimmer Pink	3
6	Jingle Bells 4.0	3
7	Oglevee PX 12004	3
8	Jingle Bells 3	2

Figure 5. Consumers were shown 12 plants that represent different colors and styles of poinsettias and were asked to select the three plants they would most likely buy. Results are the percent of participants who selected each plant in

FLORIDA COLOR AND STYLE PREFERENCE		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Monet Twilight	17
2	Cortez Burgundy	14
3	Visions of Grandeur	12
4	Max Red	12
5	Winter Rose Dark Red	10
6	Ecke 1055	8
7	White Christmas	7
8	Marblestar	5
9	DaVinci	4
10	Enduring Pink	4
11	Silverstar Red	4
12	Freedom Salmon	3



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approximately 450 attendees and 334 useable surveys for the first four questions shown in figures one through four on page 24. For these four questions, individual plants, without names, were placed on a separate bench for each question.

North Carolina State University. The North Carolina State survey is conducted at a ▶



Figure 6. The top five consumer selections of the novelty cultivars.

NORTH CAROLINA NOVELTY CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Cortez Burgundy	42
2	Santa Claus Marble	18
3	Sonora White Glitter	18
4	Monet Twilight	16
5	Oglevee PX 12004	16

Figure 7. The top five consumer selections of the pink cultivars.

NORTH CAROLINA PINK CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Santa Claus Pink	48
2	Flirt	44
3	Maren	38
4	Cortez Hot Pink	24
5	Elegance Hot Pink	9

Figure 8. The top five consumer selections of the white

NORTH CAROLINA WHITE CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	White Christmas	63
2	Santa Claus White	57
3	Snowcap	51
4	Snowberry Punch	32
5	Festival White	19

Figure 9. The 10 highest ranked varieties when the consumers picked their favorite three out of the 113 varieties displayed.

NORTH CAROLINA OVERALL FAVORITE CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Cortez Burgundy	26
2	Sonora White Glitter	14
3	Sonora Dark Red	13
4	Candlelight	11
5	Santa Claus Red	11
6	PX 12004	10
7	Merlot	8
8	Santa Claus Marble	8
9	White Christmas	8
10	Chianti	7

Figure 10. The top ten consumer selections of the red cultivars.

NORTH CAROLINA RED CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Sonora Dark Red	36
2	Merlot	29
3	Candle Light	25
4	Santa Claus Red	25
5	Chianti Red	21
6	Cortez Electric Fire	13
7	Red Velvet	12
8	Freedom Fireworks	11
9	Silent Night	10
10	Freedom Red	10

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Figure 11. There were 110 varieties displayed, and survey participants were asked to select their favorite three varieties. These were the 10 top varieties and the percentage of participants selecting each.

PURDUE OVERALL FAVORITE CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Sonora White Glitter	9
2	Monet Twilight	6
3	Max Red	3
4	Merlot	3
5	Jingle Bells 3	3
6	Winter Rose Dark Red	3
7	Chianti Red	3
8	Premium Apricot	2
9	Ecke 54-99 R&W	2
10	Cortez Burgundy	2

Figure 12. Participants were asked to pick their favorite plant from 17 red poinsettias shown without names.

PURDUE RED CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Autumn Red, 19-02	22
2	Sonora Red	14
3	Gala Red	11
4	Premium Red	9
5	Cortez Red	8
6	Christmas Spirit	6
7	Orion Red	6
8	Early Joy Red	5
9	Ecke 1014	4
10	Euro Glory	4

Consumer Open House on a Sunday after the grower day. The plants were moved to a display area in the JC Raulston Arboretum and shown with names. There were 200 attendees and 157 useable surveys.

The consumers were asked to select their three favorite cultivars within each group; red, pink, white and novelties. Results as shown on page 26 are the top five or 10 choices in each group.

Purdue University. For the Purdue consumer survey, plants are moved to White River Gardens in Indianapolis, Ind., and shown in a conservatory there. There were more than 800 participants in the survey. For the first two survey questions, plants were shown without names. Appreciation is expressed to the staff of White River Gardens for their support and cooperation in conducting this survey.

Figure 13. Participants were shown 10 novelty poinsettias

PURDUE NOVELTY CULTIVARS		
Rank	Cultivar	Percent Chosen
1	Jingle Bells 3	29
2	Monet Twilight	24
3	Merlot	13
4	Marblestar	7
5	Winter Rose Dark Red	6
6	Enduring Pink	6
7	Avant Garde	5
8	Chianti	4
9	Cortez Burgundy	3
10	Plum Pudding	2

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

There are some differences in the results from the three locations. This is often caused by how well a particular variety performs in the different climates. Among American consumers the general rule that bigger is better is true for poinsettia consumers, so if a variety is larger relative to other plants at one location, it may get more votes there. While there are some particular differences, there are strong trends in the results from the three locations.

Red poinsettias are by far the biggest selling color and should not be overlooked in the excitement of all the new interesting novelties being introduced. 'Freedom Red' has been the major variety for many years, but it is common for it to rank in the middle or lower half of these surveys. Varieties ranking near the top of reds are those that generally have a brighter red color, smoother bracts that are held horizontal, and/or have green leaves showing through the red bracts. This would be compared to the large, bluish-red Freedom bracts that lay down and completely cover the leaves. It is interesting that two of the highest rated varieties in the Florida comparison of reds are 'Success', an old variety, and the new 'Cortez Electric Fire'; both have orange red bracts. 'Merlot' is often rated high and has a deep wine-red color.

Notice in the top overall selections or in the Florida comparisons of colors and styles that the white and pink varieties do not rank near the top. 'White Christmas' and 'Enduring Pink' are newer varieties that are recognized as having very good color and are often the highest rated varieties within

The Top Picks

Autumn Red. Distinctions of this cultivar are its earliness (several days ahead of Orion), bract presentation and plant strength. The bracts are bright, elongated and bright red with an orange

cast; foliage is dark green. Vigor is medium to low, and compared to other dark leaf cultivars, Autumn Red is more susceptible to bract edge burn.

Cortez Burgundy. The rich bract color

makes this cultivar stand out, particularly in the greenhouse. Even though the color fades with age, the resulting color still has consumer appeal. Cortez Burgundy has medium-to-large, dark burgundy-red bracts that age to dark red and dark green leaves. It finishes later than Cortez Red.

Jingle Bells 3. Featuring multi-colored red bracts with standard jingle bell coloring, this series has good branching characteristics. Jingle Bells 3 has medium green leaves and medium vigor.

Mars. An important feature of Mars is its very uniform growth habit and timing. It finishes early midseason and, in warm climates, is less sensitive to heat delay than other midseason cultivars. It has an upright habit and is slightly vigorous. Growers should note that bracts are slightly smaller than average, though a good red color.

Merlot. This is a nice deep red cultivar that performs really well at trials. It has a unique appearance among the reds and, as such, is sometimes considered a novelty. The leaves and bracts

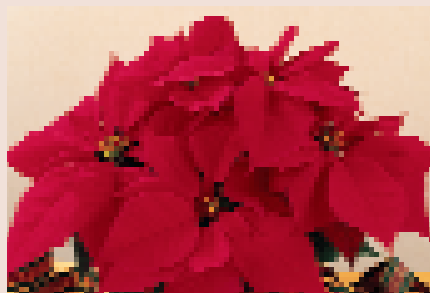
are slightly smaller than average, and it has low vigor, finishing approximately the last week of November.

Monet Twilight. Though an "old timer," this cultivar consistently rates at the top of consumer preference surveys and is a great choice for midseason. Monet Twilight is a medium- to high-vigor plant with light green foliage and apricot-pink bracts that have rose-red flecks coalescing into a rose-red margin. Monet Twilight can be a bit soft and prone to stem breakage, thus it will benefit from plant growth regulator applications for toning.

Santa Claus Marble. This is one of the nicest marbles on the market, with the largest marble-colored bracts available, excellent plant form and easy production. All cultivars in the Santa Claus series are vigorous and best used in larger formats. It finishes slightly after other colors in the series.

Sonora White Glitter. As with other jingle bell types, Sonora White Glitter sports relentlessly, but when this cultivar is true to type, it is truly outstanding and is consistently rated among consumer favorites. Culture particulars are consistent with others in the Sonora family, except slightly later in timing.

Strawberries 'N Cream. This is a truly different cultivar and is best described as a novelty marble with rose-pink and cream, irregularly marble-colored bracts. Strawberries 'N Cream has somewhat smaller than normal bracts and very low vigor; it should be used in smaller formats.



Counter-Clockwise from top: 'Autumn Red' (Ecke); 'Cortez Burgundy' (Fischer); 'Mars' (Fischer); 'Santa Claus Marble' (Selecta); 'Sonora White Glitter' (Fischer); 'Monet Twilight' (Ecke); Merlot' (Dummen).

Thanks be to God and Neptune's Harvest
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their color class. This shows that consumers have more interest in the novelties.

In the novelty group, there are several varieties

that are often among the consumers' favorites, including 'Winter Rose Dark Red', 'Monet Twilight', 'Cortez Burgundy', 'Sonora White

Glitter' and 'Carousel Red'. 'Strawberries and Cream', 'Plum Pudding' and 'Holly Point' are varieties that will rank high where they are grown to their potential. Two new varieties that received strong interest were Ecke 54-99 R&W and Oglevee PX 12004. These will be interesting to watch when they are released next year.

Some of these favorite novelties point out a dilemma for many growers. Monet Twilight has long been a favorite, but its use is decreasing because it is so vigorous and sensitive to nutritional problems. Cortez Burgundy and Sonora White Glitter tend to flower late in the season, and there have been problems with them sporting to other colors. Notice that in the Florida study 82 percent of the consumers indicated they liked jingle bell-type plants, but growers often have difficulty with them sporting. These are examples of varieties that, for growers who can do them successfully, they should continue them to take advantage of the consumer demand. ^[GPN]

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Figure 14. Sourcing for favorite cultivars.

Cultivar	Breeder	Cultivar	Breeder
54-99 R&W	Ecke	Marblestar	Fischer
1014	Ecke	Mars	Fischer
1055	Ecke	Max Red	Ecke
PX 12004	Oglevee	Merlot	Dummen
Autumn Red	Ecke	Merry Christmas 2	Selecta
Avant Garde	Ecke	Monet Twilight	Ecke
Candlelight	Selecta	Orion Red	Fischer
Carousel Pink	Fischer	Plum Pudding	Ecke
Carousel Red	Fischer	Premium Apricot	Dummen
Chianti	Ecke	Premium Hot Pink	Dummen
Christmas Spirit	Selecta	Premium Red	Dummen
Cortez Burgundy	Fischer	Red Velvet	Ecke
Cortez Electric Fire	Fischer	Santa Claus Marble	Selecta
Cortez Red	Fischer	Santa Claus Red	Selecta
DaVinci	Fischer	Silent Night	Selecta
Early Joy Red	Oglevee	Sonora Dark Red	Fischer
Enduring Pink	Ecke	Sonora Red	Fischer
Euro Glory	Dummen	Sonora White Glitter	Fischer
Freedom Fireworks	Ecke	Strawberries N Cream	Ecke
Freedom Red	Ecke	Success Red	Ecke
Freedom Salmon	Ecke	White Christmas	Selecta
Gala Red	Oglevee	Winter Rose Dark Red	Ecke
Holly Point	Ecke	Winter Rose Early	Ecke
Jester Red	Ecke	Winter Rose White	Ecke
Jingle Bells 3	Ecke	Visions of Grandeur (118)	Ecke
Limelight	Dummen		

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