

Poinsettia Trials Provide *Memorable Additions* to the Industry

BY TREVOR HILBURN

*As you plan for 2021, consider
trying out these new genetics that
stood out at trials last year.*

By the time you read this, your poinsettias will be long gone and 2020 will be in the rearview mirror. What a year it was — it brought unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 with all of the lockdowns and uncertainty for the future. The news is bright for 2021 with vaccines and record sales on the books all around. Even the pandemic didn't slow the progress of new genetics being bred and released for our beloved poinsettias.

As I write this article now and have been in perpetual motion for the last month to go to trials and collect data, I am in awe of our industry and its resilience to keep moving forward.

I would like to thank Amy Morris at N.G. Heimos, Brian Whipker at North Carolina State University, and Jill Dinger at Seville Farms for allowing me to visit their facilities during these trying and dangerous times to collect photos, talk to the growers, and really understand the releases that are coming to the market.

The Heimos trials are unique as they do both black cloth and natural day trials for their showcase, whereas North Carolina State University does no PGR and all natural day trials. The Seville trials I visited were almost a straight production trial, which offered a unique view. Additionally, I would like to thank Beekenkamp, Dümme Orange, Lazzeri, Rinehart, Selecta One and Syngenta Flowers for their continual contributions to our industry and their support to put this all together.

As I was once a grower of poinsettias and am now a sales representative supporting growers of poinsettias, it is my hope to introduce you to some of the new genetics that will be in full production in 2021. That being said, I am not encouraging wholesale changes to your current programs. If you have something that works, you should not change it. Growing poinsettias — and the varieties you grow in your

program — are a very personal decision. Varieties that work for your operation might not be successful right down the road from you or even right next door.

My practice as a grower and my suggestion as a sales representative is to always be trying a few new varieties each year to see if there is something new that offers a better fit or a better solution for your needs. It is always necessary to have a familiarity with genetics other than your bread-and-butter items, as sometimes genetics drift and cultivars are dropped by breeders.

Not to be the bearer of bad news, but Syngenta Flowers and Beekenkamp have dropped 'Aria Red', 'Charon Red', 'Mars White', 'Mars Marble', 'Marjoris Red', 'Neva Red' and 'Sonora White Glitter'. Other drops from Dümme Orange are 'Peterstar Red', 'Peterstar White', 'Snowcap', 'Majestic Pink' and 'Prima Donna', which they upgraded to 'Prima Donna 2.0'. There are wonderful substitutions to be had for each one of these selections.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The poinsettia genetics are deeply diverse from each breeder. The key to trialing new genetics is to identify your own needs. Are you looking for Black Friday varieties as a mass merchant? Is your focus more on independent garden center solutions? How about combos, churches, fundraisers or florists? Are you a grower in the Deep South worried and struggling with heat delay? Are you a northern grower dealing with cold finishing crops and worried about your whites turning cream?

No matter the need, I have narrowed the list to the top 11 new releases that I believe can fill a gap in any of these situations. Here they are in alphabetical order by variety — so let's get started.

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A Virtual View of the Trials

While we hope this brief evaluation gives you an informative overview of some of the new poinsettia introductions available this year, there is nothing quite like seeing the plants up close and personal.

We hope you enjoy these video snapshots of the trial. Just scan the QR codes using your smart device's camera, and you will be redirected to the videos.



An introduction TO THE NG HEIMOS TRIAL

'Imperial' DÜMMEN ORANGE



Princettia SUNTORY FLOWERS

'Toro Red' SYNGENTA FLOWERS



J'Adore DÜMMEN ORANGE

Trial OVERVIEW



1. *'Biancaneve'* – An incredible new white from Lazzeri breeding. Lazzeri is a relatively new name in poinsettias in the North American market. Breeding is done near Rome which, to help those who don't have a map in front of them, is about the same latitude as

Chicago, Illinois. Breeding out of this company is very exciting, and their new releases are all noteworthy. 'Alaska', which was my favorite variety last year, has some trouble with high temperatures and high light levels. 'Biancaneve', which is Italian for snow white, overcomes

this issue. It does lose a bit of its paper white coloring but is still a wonderful high-vigor cultivar worth bringing in to take a look at. It also could be a poinsettia to look toward if you are looking for a slightly whiter poinsettia than the tried-and-true 'Whitestar'.

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2. 'Candy Cane' – This is my personal favorite pick from all of the trials. Jingle Bells are always a crowd-pleaser in the market. In fact, when the trials are done in a normal year, most of these sites have plant sales and it is always the Jingle Bells

and novelties that go first. I think that 'Candy Cane' from Dümme Orange bridges a gap in genetics as it is a true 7.5-week crop even in the Deep South like the Hillister location for Seville in southeast Texas. Previous Jingle Bell genetics always seemed to

be a late finisher and susceptible to heat delay. Also, without PGR, 'Candy Cane' has the vigor to get to a pretty good size and has huge full bracts. This is definitely something to look into for a natural day Black Friday program.

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3. 'Christmas Magic Red' – This is one revenue dense poinsettia. I think this red from Selecta One really hits the mark on their goal for high density production of poinsettias. This large classic cyathia finishes almost like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting. All of the sites I visited had this variety finishing beautifully. This is truly a good poinsettia for both southern and mass market production.

4. 'Christmas Mouse' – A very unique introduction, this is both a novelty and a full production red. Unlike any other poinsettia I have seen before, this one from Selecta One has round edges on the bract instead of points or any other type of angle. 'Christmas Mouse' is also a very versatile grower and could finish in anything from a 4-inch to an 8-inch pot.

5. 'Early Polly's Pink' – This Dümme Orange upgrade on a previous variety is a true performer. It showed no heat delay even in the high heat and humidity at Seville Farms. 'Early Polly's Pink' still has strong enough vigor to fill multiple sizes of pots depending on the transplant date. The stems are strong and support the sizable watermelon pink bracts.

6. 'Imperial' – For growers in the South that often find Prestige problematic, this may be the solution for you. It is a true 8-week poinsettia without heat delay. It might even be a 7.5-week variety from the finish times I witnessed this year. 'Imperial' also has the strongest stems in all of the Dümme Orange poinsettia lineup.

7. 'Orange Glow' – Selecta One really brought a never before seen color to the poinsettia world. This is a wonderful upright introduction. For Northern growers, this will most likely finish for your Thanksgiving week sales as a 7.5-week variety. I did see a bit of heat delay in Texas. The bracts are enormous and showy. The color really jumped out at me looking across a sea of poinsettias.

8. 'Prestigious Red' – Prestige, which has been a flagship for the Dümme Orange poinsettia genetics for as long as I can remember, adds this wonderful gap filler. It finishes about a week later than Early Prestige and a week earlier than standard Prestige. As this cultivar is out of the same genetic breeding program as the well-known Prestige, you can expect all of the wonderful characteristics such as large finishing bracts and that sharp Prestige Red color.





9. 'Pure White' – My new favorite white poinsettia, this introduction from Rhinehart did not disappoint. The almost paper white coloring really glows. It has full coverage bracts and darker undercarriage leaves. The form on this variety is a perfect V-shape. It is fairly vigorous, so you will need to be active in your growth regulation. There was no heat delay at the Heimos trial where I was able to view it, so it could make for a Northern Black Friday program. I think it has a lot of potential for being a great poinsettia to paint.

The bract size on this beauty is unbelievable. Even with a pinch, the trials at NC State showed the bracts were easily 11 inches across. This is a very high vigor poinsettia that would best be suited for larger containers. Even for its size, the plant was

very sturdy when I moved it around for photography. It is definitely one to look toward for large finish reds.

As a salesperson who only gets to visit these trials for a day or so, my evaluations are just a snapshot in time. For growers out there, I can only give you my takes by looking at the end of the process and what my

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10. 'Robyn Pink' – I think this is a knockout from Beekenkamp. This soft lipstick pink matches its partner 'Robyn Red'. Both varieties have incredibly strong stems and are a nice compact grower perfect for 6-inch production, in my opinion. This variety showed no heat delay from any of the trials. I think that this certainly has a spot in any novelty program.

growers here and at the trials have told me about growing these varieties. Every grower and location are different with their successes and failures.

I encourage you all to reach out to your local sales representatives to set up trials to see if any of these new introductions are the right fit for you. [gpn](#)

11. 'Toro Red' – Syngenta really brought a beast to the market with this variety. For anyone still doing straight ups, this would be a good choice.

Trevor Hilburn is a sales representative for McHutchison in Texas and Louisiana. He attended the 2020 H.G. Heimos Greenhouses, North Carolina State University and Seville Farms – Hillister facility trial locations.



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