

10th Anniversary National Poinsettia Trial Program Highlights

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With 119 poinsettia cultivars from five companies, it was a banner year for the poinsettia trials. The total included 24 new cultivars and several experimental cultivars representing the latest in breeding efforts and future introductions. Unfortunately, the ice storm prevented many of you from being able to attend the open house. In fact, our greenhouses were without power for much of Thursday. A few hardy souls reviewed the poinsettias in 46°F greenhouses. The greenhouses warmed up later in the day to a balmy 52°F before we were able to get the power back. Interestingly, the only damage occurred to a few plants along the wall of the greenhouse. The silver lining - sort of - is that we now have several pictures of cold damage on poinsettias that we didn't have before.

We are especially pleased that this was the 10th Anniversary of the National Poinsettia Trial Program - the cooperative program with Allen Hammer at Purdue University and James Barrett at University of Florida. The National Trial Program has been generously supported by the poinsettia breeders who have made possible this important service to growers. This year's results will be posted on <http://www.poinsettia-trial.org/> and published in GPN. The website and GPN can also be consulted for reviews of the previous trials.

We also want to acknowledge Roy Larson, who coordinated the North Carolina State University portion of the trial program for 9 out of the last 10 years. Roy grew poinsettias for 46 years and conducted poinsettia trials for many of those years. Last year Roy turned over responsibilities for the trials to John Dole and Brian Whipker. It was through the efforts of Roy and other North Carolina industry leaders that North Carolina has become the second largest producer of poinsettias in the United States producing 5 million pots worth \$16+ million wholesale in 2001.

We expanded the Poinsettia Trials to two houses this year. House 1 contained the standard poinsettia trial

with 6 plants of each cultivar grown in 6 1/2 -inch pots with pot rings and pinched, but without the use of growth retardants. Our goal was to show the natural vigor of each cultivar. Plants were potted August 22 and 23 and pinched on Sept. 11. Osmocote 14-14-14 was applied at the rate one teaspoon/pot on Aug. 30 and 160 ppm 20-10-20 constant liquid fertilization was alternated with 15-0-15, based on media testing. Plants were leached as needed with clear water. Marathon was applied on Oct. 4, magnesium sulfate (1 lb/100 gal) and sodium molybdate (1.25 oz/100 gal.) on Sept. 27 and Oct. 28, and Subdue (0.5 oz./100 gal) on Oct. 14. A number of the cultivars were also grown in 4-inch pots to see how they would do in the smaller size.

In House 2, two plants of each cultivar were also grown in 6 1/2 -inch pots and pinched and with up to two applications of Cycocel/B-Nine (750/1000 ppm) tank mix. Growth regulators were applied on Sept. 26 and Oct. 5. Our goal was to produce as uniform a crop as possible across all of the cultivars. We also had 8-inch pots with 3 cuttings/pot and trees in 6 1/2 -inch pots for viewing.

Highlights

While no blockbuster cultivars were released this year, several of last year's numbered cultivars were named. We found two of the them to be especially interesting - 'Chianti Red' (Ecke) and 'Merlot' (Dummen). 'Chianti' has deep red, oak leaf-shaped bracts on dark green foliage. The upright bracts surround the very different looking red flowers (cyathia), each of which is encircled by a ring of bright yellow nectaries. The flowers on other poinsettias are green with only a little red at the top and have only 0 to 2 nectaries per flower. While the unusual flowers may put this cultivar in the novelty class, the exceptionally dark red bracts means 'Chianti' will have mainstream appeal. The bracts are not large but the plant works well in pots sizes up to 6 1/2 -inch. The upright branching structure will make 'Chianti' easy to sleeve. 'Merlot' has dark red bracts with even

darker young bracts. The foliage is dark green. This cultivar is also low to medium vigor, best suited to pot sizes up to 6 1/2 -inch. Again the dark red bracts make this cultivar stand out among the many reds.

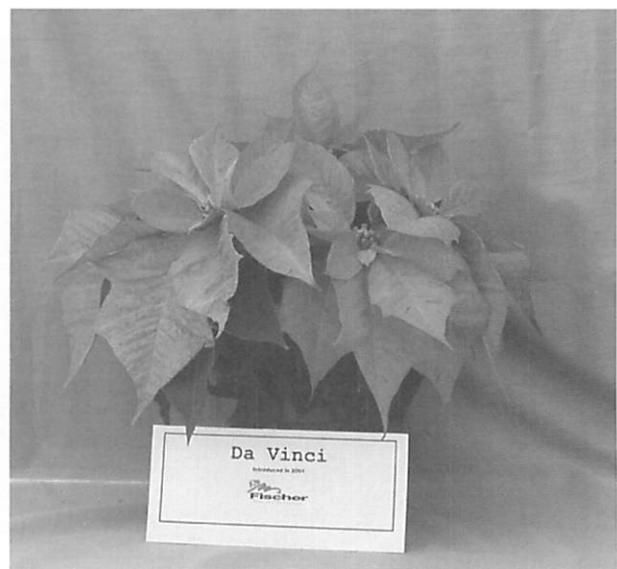
Several companies have been promoting one or more of their cultivars as high density plants. These are low vigor plants that stay compact and are good for tight 6-inch production or for 4 to 5 1/2 -inch pots. 'Pepride' (Ecke) was one of the first of these highly compact cultivars and it is still a good choice. Several other cultivars are now available and should be considered including 'Max Red' (Ecke), 'Premium Red' (Dümmen), 'Red Angel' (Oglevee) and 'Red Elf'

(Fischer). These newer cultivars generally have medium to large bracts on small plants. Consequently, we noticed that the plants often had a tight, cramped look as the large bracts competed for room atop the small plants. Of course, the pot rings we used on the 6 1/2 -inch pots accentuated this look. While these cultivars were specifically intended to be grown without growth regulators, a light application may make the bracts look more proportional.

Certainly two cultivars that caused much discussion were 'Cortez Burgundy' (Fischer) and 'Plum Pudding' (Ecke). 'Cortez Burgundy' has medium to large dark burgundy red bracts which age to dark red and dark green leaves; 'Plum Pudding' has small light purple bracts and light green leaves. While both cultivars seem to be prone to mutations, an especially large number of 'Cortez Burgundy' plants were red in a recent visit to a commercial greenhouse that grows large numbers of the cultivar. In addition, sufficient 'Cortez Burgundy' cuttings have been difficult to obtain. 'Plum Pudding', on the other hand, has good postharvest life and is more reliable and easier to grow. Unfortunately, 'Plum Pudding' produces small, muddy colored bracts and open, elongated bract clusters when grown with other poinsettia cultivars. Medium size bracts and uniform, bright purple color is obtained when the plants are grown warm and under shade (2000 fc). In summary, comparing the two cultivars is almost pointless as they are so different. You should try both cultivars and let your customers decide.



Chianti plant and cyathia



Da Vinci

Pink is a tough category to rate as people's preferences tend to vary. Personally we prefer uniform, bright pink bracts without darker pink veins or fading on the older bracts which is typical of many pinks. 'Enduring Pink' (Ecke) and 'Santa Claus Pink' (Selecta Klemm) tended to exhibit those characteristics. Both are early season but 'Enduring Pink' has dark foliage and is compact, while 'Santa Claus Pink' has light green foliage and is quite vigorous. For a late pink you may want to use 'Success Light Pink' (Ecke) which was not in the trial this year. It has very smooth, bright clear pink bracts.

The class of peppermint or novelty pinks has advanced from the days of the old 'Pink Peppermint.' Today we have several great cultivars. 'Da Vinci' (Fischer) looked quite good - it was an early flowering, compact plant with apricot pink bracts flecked with dark pink. Plants were uniform and bracts were nicely set off by the dark green foliage. 'Monet Twilight' (Ecke) is now an "old-time" cultivar but still a great choice for midseason. The apricot pink bracts have rose-red flecks coalescing into a rose-red margin. 'Monet Twilight' is a vigorous plant with light green foliage. 'Christmas Candy' (Selecta Klemm) was one of the last cultivars to flower in the trial but worth the wait. The pale apricot pink bracts with medium pink flecks were carried on medium vigor plants. The upright facing bracts looked fresh compared to some of the other peppermint types, especially late in the season when other cultivars are showing their age.

Among white cultivars, two favorites are 'Whitestar' (Fischer) and 'Snowcap' (Ecke), cultivars that have been with us for a while. They have large white (as opposed to cream-colored) bracts on easy to grow plants. Of the two 'Snowcap' tends to be more vigorous and should be used accordingly. Two newer cultivars that also had bright white bracts and performed well were 'Santa Claus White' (Selecta Klemm) and 'White Christmas' (Selecta Klemm). 'Santa Claus White' is much more vigorous, suitable for 6 1/2 -inch or larger pots, while 'White Christmas' would be better for 6 1/2 -inch or smaller pots.

Be sure to check out the trial results for some of our other favorite cultivars including a number of other reds as well as some cultivars in the rose, salmon, jingle bells, and marble categories.

While we have discussed the cultivars by color, we want to talk about a couple series in particular. Overall, the Santa Claus series has done well with good bright clean colors on vigorous plants. The latter point should be stressed as this series reminds us of the old days of hardy, vigorous cultivars such as V-14 which worked great for larger containers. Another interesting and attractive group is the Punch series but their tall size compared with their small bracts may limit their appeal.



Santa Claus Pink



Red Angel



Results from the North Carolina State University Poinsettia Cultivar Trials. Note that vigor and comments are subjective and will vary with the individual grower. We defined anthesis as the appearance of pollen on the flowers but some cultivars develop more quickly than others and would be marketable sooner than the indicated anthesis date. Bract diameter was the average of two measurements - one at the widest diameter and the other perpendicular to the first. Each year is different - this year the trial plants were slower to flower and slightly shorter than in past and this should be taken into account. On a completely biased note, some of our favorites are underlined.

Variety	First bract color	Anthesis	Height (inches)	Bract diameter (inches)	Vigor	Comments
Early Dark Leaf Reds						
Coco 2000 Red (Dümmen)	20-Oct	27-Nov	13.2	14.2	low-medium	Rosy cast to bracts
Early Joy Red (Oglevee)	9-Oct	17-Nov	13.2	13.2	medium	Earliest cultivar in this year's trial
Euro Star (Dümmen)	20-Oct	28-Nov	13.0	12.4	medium	
<u>Festival Red</u> (Oglevee)	20-Oct	28-Nov	15.1	12.8	medium	Large bracts
Freedom Bright Red (Ecke)	21-Oct	25-Nov	12.1	15.6	medium	
Freedom Fireworks (Ecke)	20-Oct	27-Nov	13.7	13.6	medium	Elongated bracts
Freedom Red (Ecke)	18-Oct	22-Nov	13.9	11.9	medium	
Gala Red (Oglevee)	18-Oct	29-Nov	12.8	12.4	low-medium	Large bracts
Galaxy Red (Fischer)	19-Oct	25-Nov	12.9	12.0	medium	Discontinued
<u>Max Red</u> (Ecke)	19-Oct	27-Nov	13.7	11.4	low	Upright bracts
Olympia (Fischer)	20-Oct	28-Nov	11.9	12.8	low-average	
Orion Red (Fischer)	17-Oct	24-Nov	11.2	10.7	low-medium	Large bracts
Peptide Red (Ecke)	15-Oct	30-Nov	11.2	10.8	low	Oak leaf-shaped, upright bracts
<u>Premium Red</u> (Dümmen)	13-Oct	25-Nov	10.3	11.2	low	
Prestige (Ecke)	23-Oct	27-Nov	14.7	12.3	medium	Very smooth bracts
Red Elf (Fischer)	18-Oct	26-Nov	10.5	10.6	low	
<u>Redberry Punch</u> (Ecke)	15-Oct	24-Nov	15.7	12.0	high	Small, upright bracts
Velveteen Red (Ecke)	21-Oct	25-Nov	14.3	12.9	medium	Upright bracts, some edge burn noted
Victory Red (Dümmen)	22-Oct	28-Nov	11.8	11.5	medium	
Winterfest Red (Oglevee)	21-Oct	30-Nov	15.0	9.0	high	Transition bracts noticeable
99-1977-03 (Dümmen)	11-Oct	21-Nov	12.1	11.1	medium	
99-3507-05 (Dümmen)	18-Oct	29-Nov	9.4	12.0	low	
Midseason Dark Leaf Reds						
<u>Chianti Red</u> (Ecke)	28-Oct	4-Dec#	15.8	11.4	low - medium	Oak leaf-shaped, upright bracts, very dark red, distinctive nectaries
Christmas Dream (Selecta Klemm)	19-Oct	4-Dec	14.3	13.3	medium	Tight display
Christmas Feelings (Selecta Klemm)	18-Oct	4-Dec	11.4	14.0	low-medium	
Cortez Dark Red (Fischer)	18-Oct	7-Dec	12.3	11.8	low-medium	
Cortez Fire (Fischer)	21-Oct	4-Dec	11.1	13.8	low-medium	
Eternity Red (Dümmen)	21-Oct	5-Dec	12.5	12.9	medium	Large bracts
Happy Christmas (Selecta Klemm)	15-Oct	5-Dec	11.3	11.9	low	Bright red with a slight orange cast
Mondial Red (Dümmen)	21-Oct	5-Dec	11.1	12.1	low-medium	
Nova Red (Fischer)	19-Oct	2-Dec	11.0	14.4	low	Large bracts, discontinued
Nutcracker Red	21-Oct	6-Dec	15.3	14.1	medium-high	
Picacho (Fischer)	21-Oct	6-Dec	11.8	11.2	low-medium	Brick red
Red Angel (Oglevee)	21-Oct	1-Dec	13.4	12.5	low-medium	Small bracts, some edge burn noted
Silent Night (Selecta Klemm)	20-Oct	6-Dec	12.1	12.8	medium	Large bracts
SK 23 (Selecta Klemm)	24-Oct	6-Dec	14.5	9.6	high	Slight blue cast to bracts
Sonora Fire (Fischer)	25-Oct	2-Dec	11.8	11.7	low-medium	Oak leaf-shaped bracts, discontinued
Sonora Red (Fischer)	21-Oct	4-Dec	13.9	12.3	low-medium	Oak leaf-shaped bracts
Spotlight Dark Red (Dümmen)	21-Oct	3-Dec	14.7	14.0	medium-high	
99-2336-05 (Dümmen)	14-Oct	6-Dec	11.8	12.5	low-medium	Slight blue cast to bracts
99-3259-03 (Dümmen)	21-Oct	4-Dec	15.4	12.5	medium-high	

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Midseason Light Leaf Reds						
Candle Light (Selecta Klemm)	30-Oct	8-Dec	13.5	12.7	medium-high	
Christmas Bells (Selecta Klemm)	20-Oct	5-Dec	14.0	11.3	medium-high	Tight bract display
Christmas Cookie (Selecta Klemm)	19-Oct	7-Dec	11.6	12.7	low	
Santa Claus Red (Selecta Klemm)	21-Oct	27-Nov	14.7	15.5	high	Light red bracts
Late Dark Leaf Reds						
Christmas Season (Selecta Klemm)	22-Oct	8-Dec	13.5	11.5	medium	
Christmas Time (Selecta Klemm)	14-Oct	11-Dec	12.6	11.9	low-medium	
Christmas Wish (Selecta Klemm)	23-Oct	8-Dec	13.9	13.4	medium	
Cortez Red (Fischer)	24-Oct	9-Dec	10.7	12.5	low	
Dynasty Red (Oglevee)	22-Oct	11-Dec	13.1	12.4	medium	
Elegance Red (Dümmen)	24-Oct	14-Dec	13.5	12.0	medium	One of the latest cultivars in this year's trial
Giant Red (Fischer)	23-Oct	9-Dec	10.3	12.1	low	Large bracts, tight display
Malibu Red (Dümmen)	23-Oct	8-Dec	10.9	11.5	low-medium	
Mars (Fischer)	21-Oct	8-Dec	14.7	11.5	medium	
Merlot (Dümmen)	15-Oct	9-Dec	11.6	10.3	low-medium	
Pizarro (Fischer)	30-Oct	13-Dec	8.5	9.7	low-medium	Oak leaf-shaped bracts, discontinued
Red Diamond (Fischer)	31-Oct	14-Dec	11.0	10.8	medium	One of the latest cultivars in this year's trial
Sonora Dark Red (Fischer)	21-Oct	8-Dec	11.0	12.0	low-medium	Oak leaf-shaped bracts
99-0104-19 (Dümmen)	20-Oct	9-Dec	13.2	13.9	medium	Elongate, rounded bracts
Novelty Reds						
Carousel (Fischer)	25-Oct	15-Dec	13.9	8.3	low	Small wavy dark red bracts, one of the latest cultivars in this year's trial
Holly Point (Ecke)	27-Oct	6-Dec	7.9	10.1	very low	Red bracts, medium green foliage with cream edges
Silverstar Red (Fischer)	21-Oct	8-Dec	10.8	11.7	low	Bright cherry red bracts, grayish green foliage with white margins
Winter Rose Dark Red (Ecke)	1-Nov	1-Dec	14.3	6.0	low	Distinctive curled under bracts
Early Pinks						
Coco 2000 Pink (Dümmen)	25-Oct	29-Nov	11.4	13.5	low	Medium pink bracts with darker veins, some fading on older bracts
Enduring Pink (Ecke)	18-Oct	22-Nov	12.5	11.5	low - medium	Upright light pink bracts, very little fading
Freedom Pink (Ecke)	28-Oct	28-Nov	13.0	12.2	medium	Medium pink bracts with darker veins, some fading on older bracts, dark green foliage
Pepride Pink (Ecke)	18-Oct	28-Nov	8.4	10.3	very low	Oak leaf shaped, upright bracts, medium pink with darker veins and young bracts
Premium Lipstick Pink (Dümmen)	19-Oct	25-Nov	9.0	10.7	low	Medium pink with darker veins, same fading on older bracts
Santa Claus Pink (Selecta Klemm)	29-Oct	29-Nov	15.9	16.0	high	Medium pink bracts, slightly darker veins and young bracts
Midseason Pinks						
Festival Pink (Oglevee)	1-Nov	7-Dec	10.2	11.3	low - medium	Medium pink with darker veins
Flirt (Fischer)	2-Nov	1-Dec	12.5	12.4	medium	Medium pink with darker veins and young bracts
Sonora Pink (Fischer)	31-Oct	4-Dec	13.5	11.8	low	Oak leaf shaped bracts, light pink with darker veins and young bracts, some fading on older bracts
Winter Rose Deep Pink (Ecke)	27-Oct	7-Dec	11.2	5.2	low	Distinctive curled under bracts, rose pink
Winterfest Pink (Oglevee)	4-Nov	*	14.8	12.5	medium - high	Light pink with darker young bracts, transitional bracts obvious

Variety	First bract color	Anthesis	Height (inches)	Bract diameter (inches)	Vigor	Comments
Late Pinks						
Carousel Pink (Fischer)	26-Oct	13-Dec	13.0	8.0	low	Small, wavy, medium pink bracts, excellent branch strength
Cortez Pink (Fischer)	3-Nov	8-Dec	16.3	12.8	low - medium	Light pink bracts, older bracts appear very faded
Elegance Pink (Dümmen)	24-Oct	12-Dec	10.1	10.9	low	Medium pink bracts with darker veins, some fading on older bracts
Malibu Pink (Dümmen)	25-Oct	17-Dec	11.4	12.9	medium	Medium pink bracts, some fading on older bracts, one of the latest to flower in this year's trial
Silverstar Pink (Fischer)	27-Oct	11-Dec	9.3	10.1	very low	Light pink bracts with darker young bracts, grayish green foliage with white margins
Winter Rose Pink (Ecke)	5-Nov	8-Dec	13.8	5.3	low	Distinctive curled under bracts, medium pink, much fading on older bracts
Early Whites						
Premium White (Dümmen)	20-Oct	30-Nov	9.7	10.3	low	Creamy white bracts, compact, tight look
<u>Santa Claus White</u> (Selecta Klemm)	27-Oct	28-Nov	15.5	13.7	high	Bright white bracts, light green foliage
Snowberry Punch (Ecke)	27-Oct	24-Nov	13.3	10.8	medium	Creamy white, upright, small bracts
<u>Snowcap</u> (Ecke)	26-Oct	30-Nov	13.8	13.8	medium	White bracts, light green foliage
Sonora White (Fischer)	26-Oct	28-Nov	12.2	12.3	medium	Creamy white, oak leaf shape bracts, a lot of green showing in bracts
Midseason Whites						
<u>Festival White</u> (Oglevee)	31-Oct	3-Dec	11.9	11.6	medium	Dark cream colored bracts
Nutcracker White (Oglevee)	1-Nov	4-Dec	14.0	12.8	medium	White bracts
White Christmas (Selecta Klemm)	5-Nov	6-Dec	12.7	10.4	medium	Bright white bracts, light green foliage
<u>Whitestar</u> (Fischer)	28-Oct	2-Dec	14.8	14.2	medium	White bracts, light green foliage
<u>Winterfest White</u> (Oglevee)	3-Nov	6-Dec	12.4	12.5	medium	Creamy white bracts, a lot of green showing in bracts
Late Whites						
Coco White (Dümmen)	3-Nov	10-Dec	13.0	12.3	medium	Creamy white bracts
Winter Rose White (Ecke)	7-Nov	8-Dec	13.3	5.7	low	Distinctive curled under creamy white bracts, a lot of green showing in transitional bracts
Marbles						
<u>Marblestar</u> (Fischer)	28-Oct	8-Dec	12.8	11.4	medium	Dark pink centers and narrow white edges
Puebla (Fischer)	1-Nov	28-Nov	13.9	14.6	medium	Light pink centers and cream edges
<u>Santa Claus Marble</u> (Selecta Klemm)	8-Nov	8-Dec	18.1	11.2	very high	Light pink centers and cream edges
Silverstar Marble (Fischer)	21-Oct	5-Dec	9.8	12.0	very low	Salmon pink centers and narrow white edges
Sonora Marble (Fischer)	31-Oct	8-Dec	10.0	11.5	low	Oak leaf shaped bracts, light pink centers and a wide white edge
Winter Rose Marble (Ecke)	5-Nov	5-Dec	12.3	5.0	low	Light pink center and wide cream edges
Winterfest Marble (Oglevee)	5-Nov	15-Dec	14.5	12.4	medium	Medium pink centers and creamy edges, bracts tended to be small and transitional bracts were obvious
Jingle Bells						
Jester Jingle (Ecke)	24-Oct	29-Nov	15.1	12.3	high	Very upright bracts, medium red with pink flecks
Jingle Bells 4.0 (Ecke)	19-Oct	28-Nov	11.1	13.5	medium	Medium red with pink flecks
Sonora Jingle (Fischer)	20-Oct	4-Dec	11.0	10.8	medium	Medium red with pink flecks
Sonora White Glitter (Fischer)	27-Oct	14-Dec	11.3	9.5	medium	Oak leaf-shaped bracts, white flecks on red, one of the most popular jingle bells.

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Peppermint / Novelty Pinks						
Amazone Peppermint (Ecke)	24-Oct	25-Nov	15.2	13.4	high	Large ruffled bracts, apricot pink with pale pink flecks
Champagne (Dümmen)	26-Oct	30-Nov	12.8	12.3	high	Large ruffled bracts, dark apricot pink with light pink flecks
<u>Christmas Candy</u> (Selecta Klemm)	7-Nov	15-Dec	14.8	10.5	medium	Apricot pink with pale pink flecks
Da Vinci (Fischer)	21-Oct	26-Nov	12.2	12.8	low	Oak leaf-shaped bracts, apricot with dark pink flecks
<u>Monet Twilight</u> (Ecke)	2-Nov	3-Dec	15.9	11.8	high	Apricot pink with rose red flecks coalescing into a rose-red margin
Roses						
Freedom Rose (Ecke)	17-Oct	20-Nov	11.8	11.3	medium	Bracts tend to fade with age
<u>Cranberry Punch</u> (Ecke)	21-Oct	25-Nov	15.7	12.8	medium-high	Small upright bracts
Salmons						
Freedom Coral (Ecke)	24-Oct	30-Nov	12.6	14.0	medium	Rose pink with some orange, bracts tend to fade with age
Freedom Salmon (Ecke)	19-Oct	25-Nov	11.4	13.3	medium	Bright orange pink bracts which tend to fade with age
<u>Maren</u> (Fischer)	23-Oct	2-Dec	11.7	14.1	medium	Large, long, bright salmon pink bracts
Winterfest Coral (Oglevee)	29-Oct	9-Dec	12.5	11.4	medium	Oak leaf shaped, orangy rose colored bracts, which tend to fade with age
Purple / Burgundy						
<u>Cortez Burgundy</u> (Fischer)	26-Oct	11-Dec	12.3	11.8	low	Dark burgundy changing to dark red, prone to mutation
Plum Pudding (Ecke)	25-Oct	6-Dec	19.3	9.7	high	Small light purple bracts, best bract size and color when grown warm and under shade (2000 fc.)
Miscellaneous Novelties						
Avant Garde (Dümmen)	4-Nov	12-Dec	12.5	9.9	high	Contorted pink bracts with white edges, susceptible to late season stretch
Strawberries and Cream (Ecke)	22-Oct	12-Dec	7.6	7.2	very low	Contorted pink bracts with white edges
Lemon Snow (Fischer)	27-Oct	10-Dec	7.8	10.5	low	Actually a dark cream, could be viewed as a 'white' in mid south area.
#Does not produce pollen, anthesis determined as date cultivar was ready for sale.						
*Only one plant out of 6 was true to type.						

Acknowledgments

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