

Consumers Prefer Red Poinsettia Cultivars

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One of the first plant characteristics consumers notice is the color of the flower. Gardeners often have favorite colors that they prefer or color schemes they try to coordinate within. Most of the consumer research conducted in the last two decades has focused on flower color for cut flowers. Past research has shown that men prefer red over

other rose colors, and women prefer colors other than red. Both men and women prefer pink roses least. Another study reported that consumers preferred red over other geranium colors. Forty-six percent of consumers interviewed in Philadelphia and Washington, D. C., had purchased a poinsettia for Christmas and that 79% of those were red. We investigated consumer preferences for bract color among 47 poinsettia cultivars.

One-hundred-twenty-four people visiting the Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus, OH, during Dec., 1995 rated 47 poinsettia cultivars on the basis of their personal preferences for bract color. As individuals over 18 toured the facility, they were asked to note their preferences from the 47 displayed plants. They were free to move from plant to plant at their own pace, and return to one they had previously rated if needed. We obtained information regarding their past poinsettia purchases and demographic characteristics (age, household income and size, and gender).

On display were 24 red, 7 white, 7 pink, and 9 novelty poinsettia cultivars in the same size container, producing a plant similar in size. Four of the cultivars were not named cultivars, rather they were experimental.

Of 124 participants, 65% of the participants were female, 20% were male, and 15% chose not to answer the question. Age ranged from 20 to 95 years, with an average of 55.3 years. Number of persons living in the household ranged from 1 to 9, with an average of 2 persons. Responses to household income in 1994 were distributed among 10 categories ranging from under \$10,000 to \$90,000 or more in \$10,000 increments. Twenty-two percent chose not to answer the income question. The category with the greatest percentage of responses was over \$90,000 (13%), followed by \$40,000 to \$49,999 (11%) and \$60,000 to \$69,999 (11%). Median household income was between \$40,000 and \$49,999.

Sixty-seven percent of the participants had purchased a poinsettia in 1994, 23% did not, and 10% chose not to respond. Forty-four percent had purchased a red poinsettia in 1995, 15% had purchased a pink poinsettia,

10% had purchased a white poinsettia, 11% had purchased a multi-colored poinsettia, and 6% had purchased a salmon or peach colored poinsettia.

Only 12 cultivars received a rating of 4.0 or higher on a 5.0 scale (Table 1). Sonora, a red cultivar, received the highest average rating of any cultivar (4.6), regardless of bract color. Eighty-three percent of participants rated it good (4.0) or excellent (5.0). Ten of the top 12 cultivars were red. Two exceptions were Monet, a peach cultivar, and Angelica Pink. Monet was rated good or excellent by 77% of the participants and Angelica Pink was rated good or excellent by 69% of the participants. This indicates that red cultivars were preferred over other colors, consistent with other research.

We compared the ratings of poinsettia buyers with those of non-poinsettia buyers and found that there were no differences between the consumer groups in age, household size, or gender. Their ratings were similar except for Jingle Bells III, which non-poinsettia buyers rated Jingle Bells III higher (4.3) than poinsettia buyers (3.8).

We compared consumers who had purchased a red poinsettia to those who had purchased non-red colors. Yet, of the 47 cultivars rated, only one difference emerged. Red-poinsettia-buyers rated Sonora higher (4.9) than non-red-poinsettia buyers (4.5).

We compared the preferences of men and women. Men rated Red Elegance higher (3.7) when compared to women (3.3) whereas women rated Freedom White higher (3.1) than men (2.4).

This was a relatively extensive consumer evaluation of poinsettia cultivars available in the U.S. market. Our results were consistent with previous researchers in that red flower, or bract, colors were most preferred. We found few differences when comparing men and women, non-buyers with buyers, and non-red-buyers with red-buyers. This would indicate that retailers may be able to market poinsettias widely since the individual in that market may have very similar preferences.



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Table 1. Poinsettia cultivars rated 4.0 or higher customer evaluation of 47 poinsettia cultivars.

Cultivar (color)	Supplier	Percent Rating Cv.	Average Rating ² Good or Excellent
Sonora (red)	Fischer	83	4.6 a
Red Sails	Paul Ecke Ranch	71	4.4 b
Eckespoint Success	Paul Ecke Ranch	70	4.4 b
Freedom Red	Paul Ecke Ranch	84	4.4 b
Cortez (red)	Fischer	70	4.4 b
Monet (peach)	Paul Ecke Ranch	77	4.4 b
Stop Light (red)	Express Seed Co.	73	4.3 b
Red Delight	Mikkelsen's	67	4.2 b
Lilo Red	Paul Ecke Ranch	68	4.2 b
Dynasty (red)	Oglevee	60	4.1 bc
Angelica Pink	Paul Ecke Ranch	69	4.1 bc
Jolly Red	Ball	59	4.0 c

² Ratings were based on a 1 to 5 scale where 1=strongly dislike and 5=strong like; average ratings were compared in pairs using a Student's t-test with 0.05 confidence level.

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