Cultural Tips for 4-1/2" Winter Rose Poinsettias

Beth Harden
Deep Well Flower Farm

(Editors Note: Winter Rose is a very popular poinsettia variety to grow, but grower success of achieving a well proportioned plant can be elusive. When we saw Beth Harden's 4-1/2" Winter Rose plants, we were impressed. Beth was more than willing to share her cultural practices which are listed below.)

In 2000 my Winter Rose crop finished at a better height and were well proportioned than in 1999 or 1998. I attribute this to changes made in growth regulator applications. As with every year, planting date, pinch date and fertility deviated some from my standard schedule (Table 1).

The plants grow vigorously and finish well-proportioned in 4-1/2" geranium pots. With less success I have grown Winter Rose in 4" standard, 4-1/2" azalea, 5" azalea, 5" standard, and 6-1/2" azalea pots. When potting I fill the 4-1/2" geranium pots full with Metro Mix 366. It is important to have the entire 4-1/2" volume filled with substrate to achieve desired growth. The cuttings were rooted in oasis foam. The plants were irrigated each day for three days after potting. Initially I irrigate enough so the mix was thoroughly wet, ensuring there were no dry pockets. The second and third days the plants were irrigated just enough to keep the foam wet. One of those irrigations was a fungicide drench with Banrot.

I have noticed that Winter Rose requires less frequent irrigation than other varieties. One week after potting I begin constant liquid fertility with peat-lite 20-10-20 at 250 ppm N. I rotate with a calcium nitrate plus potassium nitrate mix at a 2 to 3 week interval (depending on weather and frequency of irrigation). Sodium Molybdate (0.1 ppm) is added to both fertilizer tanks. This year the molybdenum was increased to 0.2 ppm in November. Osmocote 14-14-14 was topdressed at 1/2 teaspoon per pot, and watered in. Also, S.T.E.M. was applied at the rate of 8 oz/100gal. Usually magnesium sulfate at 2 lbs/100 gal is only applied once during the crop, but this year a second

application at 1 lb/100gal was made because I suspected magnesium deficiency.

The cuttings were pinched either 2 weeks after potting or when there was 1" to 1-1/2" of new growth, but no later than September 15th. The plants were soft pinched, leaving 7 nodes if possible. The substrate was kept moist, because I believe it is critical to avoid moisture stress during lateral shoot initiation and development.

The year 2000 was my first time using both Cycocel (1500 ppm) and Bonzi (10 ppm) sprays followed by a 1 ppm Bonzi drench. I feel these applications were unorthodox and risky, but I really liked the height control with this year's plants. I was antsy about the outcome after each application. Testing a few plants with this PGR program is advisable. Last year I had experimented with Bonzi drenches preceded by two Bonzi sprays.

In the past I have either used Cycocel sprays or Bonzi sprays, followed by Bonzi drenches. Until this year my 4-1/2" poinsettias always finished slightly bigger than desired. I never apply PGR's sprays or drenches when the substrate needs irrigating. Usually I apply PGR's the day after irrigation. After every PGR application, the vigor and variability of shoot growth and development is noted. At least twice weekly root growth is checked. I feel it is important to maintain vigorous growth when controlling height with multiple applications of PGRs.

Pest control varies each year. Marathon G is still applied, however I suspect whitefly resistance is beginning to appear. Attain TR and Duraplex were also used. Phytotoxicity has been noticed with Duraplex on other poinsettia varieties. I had successful control of whiteflies with Sanmite 4oz/100gal sprayed under the foliage.

In 2000 I had a 4-1/2" Winter Rose Crop with well-proportioned plant size, excellent branching and fully developed bracts. I wonder what the results will be in 2001?

Table 1. Winter Rose 4-1/2" production schedule used in 2000.

Date(s)	Activity
8/23	Transplant cuttings
9/10	Pinch plants
Fertility: (clear water irrigation on Saturday, Sunday and/or Monday)	
Injector Tank Change Dates:	
8/28, 9/18, 10/12, 10/30	20-10-20 (250 ppm N + 0.1 ppm Mo)
9/4, 9/11, 10/2, 10/23, 11/6	Calcium Nitrate and Potassium Nitrate (250 ppm N + 0.1 ppm Mo)
11/27	Fertility stopped
Supplemental Fertility:	
9/10	Osmocote 14-14-14 (1/2 teaspoon/pot)
10/2	Magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) (2#/100gal)
10/12	S.T.E.M. (8 oz/100gal)
10/30	Magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) (1#/100gal)
11/6	Sodium Molybdate increased to 0.2 ppm
Plant Growth Regulators:	
9/22	Cycocel spray (1500 ppm)
10/01	Bonzi spray (10 ppm)
10/20	Bonzi 1 ppm drench (2 to 4 oz/pot)
10/29	Bonzi 0.5 ppm drench (2 to 4 oz /pot; tall plants only)
Pest Control:	
8/25	Banrot (8 oz/100gal)
10/25	Subdue MAXX (1/2 oz/100gal)
9/12, 9/26	Duraplex (1 canister /house hung above plant height)
10/01	Attain TR (1 canister /house hung above plant height)
10/12	Marathon G (1/3 teaspoon/pot [applied 1-2 weeks later than usual])
10/20	Sanmite (4 oz/100gal)