

New Poinsettia Varieties: Something For Everyone

Roy A. Larson

Poinsettia growers in the 1980's are fortunate to have a good selection of varieties from which to choose. Growers in 1988 probably have an all-time high in the assortment available to them. Market need is usually the guiding force in this choice, and I can't think of a possible market not covered.

Over the last few years we have tried many of the selections which propagators thought warranted evaluation. The 1987 season was no exception. A major difference for us was that Beth Thorne, my research technician then, had to do all the work because I was either in Denmark, the hospital, or recuperating. She did an extremely fine job, and I wanted to share her efforts with you.

"Celebrate"

A spectacular variety was Eckespoint® Celebrate (code name C-27). The bract size was reminiscent of Eckespoint C-1 Red. Beth grew them as single-stemmed and pinched plants. She propagated some cuttings on August 13th, potted them September 8th (one cutting per 6" plastic pot), and pinched them September 15th. On December 5th the plants were 10" tall, and

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averaged 7 breaks/plant. Single-stemmed plants were potted August 31st (one cutting/5" pot, 3/6½" pot), and treated with a 1:60 Cycocel spray on September 30th. Plants in the 5" pots averaged 9" in height while 11" was the average for 3 plants in the 6½" pots. We sleeved plants in the 6½" pots, and 48 hours later we removed the sleeves and observed the plants for epinasty (petioles turned downward). No epinasty occurred. The plants were still attractive when we discarded them from our post-greenhouse evaluations in mid-January.

Growers who propagate their own cuttings usually have to quit the propagation season quite early when their major production is in pinched plants. They quit, just when the stock plants are most productive. This variety is so attractive as a single-stemmed plant that it would be worthwhile to treat some of the plants as we once handled Barbara Ecke Supreme, Indianapolis Red, and Eckespoint C-1 Red. We consider this form to be a "Carriage trade" item and the most sophisticated florist shop managers should have an urge to provide it to their customers.

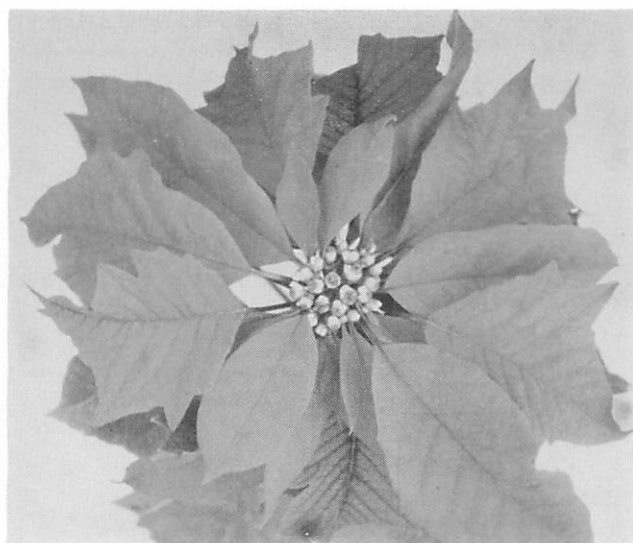
"Lilo

The variety Lilo (#91) to us seemed better suited for the mass markets. We especially liked it when one cutting was placed in a 5" pot and then pinched.

We also grew "Lilo" in 6" pots, and measured plant responses in an experiment with Cycocel and Bonzi. Untreated plants were 30cm tall (12") on November 25th, while "Annette Hegg Dark Red" and "Gutbier V-14 Glory" control plants were 31cm (12") and 24cm (10"), respectively.



Mikkelsen's "Merrimaker"

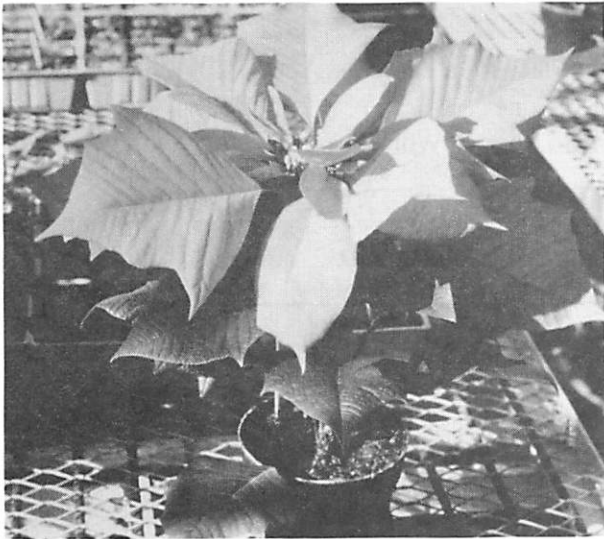


Mikkelsen's "Minstrel"

We sleeved "Lilo" and "Annette Hegg Dark Red" plants, and 48 hours later we removed them from the sleeves. The plants were photographed 3 hours after unsleeving. Epinasty was not a problem. Our plants remained stationary and did not go on a delivery run, so we cannot say what effect shipping might have on it. No variety from our greenhouse outlasted Lilo, even under darkened conditions in some homes.

"Sup Ji Bi"

If anything slows down acceptance of this variety it might be its name. I did get to witness the evaluation of this variety because the cuttings did not arrive until early October. Cuttings were potted on October 7th, pinched October 27th, and grown under extended day lengths until early November. The plants were not mature until mid-January and by then I was back to work. I don't think I have ever seen wider bracts, and the plant breaks freely after pinching. It just about has to be grown as a pinched plant because single-stemmed plants are self-branching and those basal branches are not as attractive as those which develop after pinching. Again epinasty did not occur after 48 hours in paper sleeves.



Single-stemmed "Celebrate" in a 5" pot.



"Lilo" plants in a growth-regulator experiment, and grown in 5" pots.



"Lilo", left, and "Annette Hegg Dark Red", right, after 48 hours in paper sleeves.



"Sup Ji Bi"

(Continued on back cover)

Three poinsettia seasons ago we grew the Mikkelsen variety "Merrimaker" and its color is a magnificent red. The plants were vigorous growers for us and a vivid floral display was achieved. Two years ago we tried the Mikkelsen selection "Minstrel", and its early blooming trait under natural days makes it a good choice for early sales. No black cloth was needed to have plants in flower by mid-November.

We did not receive selection from other propagators in 1986 and 1987 but the reader should be aware that other firms are involved in poinsettia breeding projects. If you do get opportunities to observe new varieties under your own conditions you should welcome such chances. No one knows your customers as well as you should, and you can get their reactions. We hope those of us involved in such evaluations can recognize promising varieties from those not so promising, but we're not the ones you are relying upon to buy most of your plants. If you don't get the chance to try some new selections in 1988 visit someone who did. We will have several selections in glass and plastic houses.



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NORTH CAROLINA
 COMMERCIAL FLOWER GROWERS' ASSOC.
 ROY A. LARSON, EDITOR
 DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE
 N.C. STATE UNIVERSITY
 BOX 7609
 RALEIGH, N.C. 27695-7609
 (919) 737-3132