

THOSE TEMPTING LATE POINSETTIA CUTTINGS -- ARE THEY WORTH SAVING?

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Poinsettia stock plants generally have an abundance of high-quality shoots in late August and early September. A grower has two major options - regrettably discard them, or take cuttings for single-stem production. Most schedules would indicate it is too late to use them for pinched plants. It should take at least 3 weeks before the cuttings would be adequately rooted for potting, and in September it might take even longer. A 10- to 14-day interval from potting to pinching has been considered necessary for good shoot development after the pinch. Such a schedule would take one into early October before pinching and one shouldn't be able to produce much of a flowering poinsettia with such a treatment.

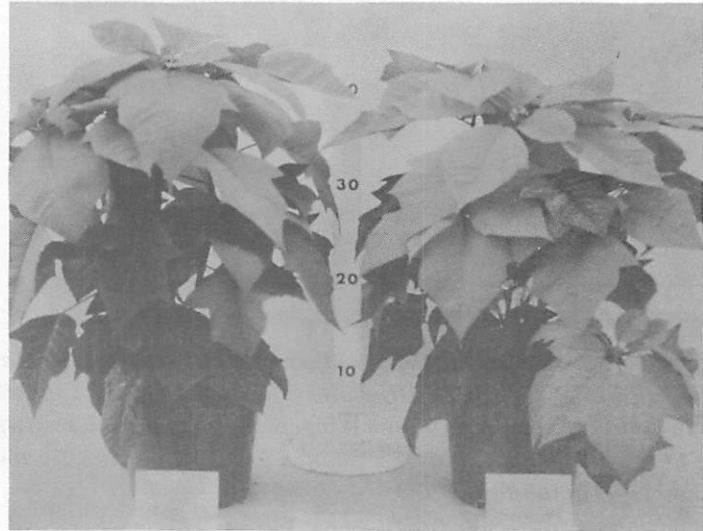


Figure 1. 'Eckespoint Freedom' pinched on Sept. 23 (Left) or Sept. 30 (Right). Photo taken on December 10.

Table 1. Growth and flowering of 10 poinsettia cultivars which were pinched on September 23 or 30th. Natural short days were started on October 10, and data were taken December 9.

Cultivars	Plant height		No. of flowering shoots	
	Sept. 23	Sept. 30	Sept. 23	Sept. 30
Annette Hegg Dark Red	17"	19"	6	7
Eckespoint Celebrate 2	10"	12"	6	8
Eckespoint Freedom	12"	11"	7	6
Eckespoint Jingle Bells	12"	12"	6	7
Eckespoint Lilo	13"	14"	8	9
Eckespoint Red Sails	14"	14"	6	8
Gross Supjibi	10"	11"	6	8
Gutbier V-10 Amy	11"	11"	9	9
Gutbier V-14 Glory	12"	12"	6	7
Gutbier V-17 Angelika Red	15"	14"	8	8

In early September, 1991 we yielded to temptation and took cuttings from stock plants of 10 prominent cultivars. We planted the cuttings (one per 6 1/2" pot) on September 23 and placed them under long days (lights from 10:00 PM to 2:00 AM). Half of the plants of each cultivar were pinched at potting (September 23), while the other half were pinched a week later. All plants were kept under long days until October 10, when natural day lengths were provided. A minimum night temperature of 65°F was maintained until mid-November, when it was

lowered to 62°F. The fertilization program was weekly applications of 20-10-20 or $\text{Ca}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot \text{KNO}_3$. The plants were spaced on 14" centers and no growth regulators were used.

Plant heights and numbers of flowering shoots were recorded on December 9 and representative plants were photographed December 10. Data are presented in Table 1. Three cultivars we trialed are shown in Figure 1 ('Eckespoint Freedom'), Figure 2 ('Eckespoint Red Sails'), and Figure 3 ('Gutbier V-14 Glory').

Plants of all cultivars probably would have been acceptable in most N.C. markets, though the plants were not as good as those planted September 4, pinched September 16, and used in the cultivar's evaluations discussed in another article earlier in this issue. We believe certain conditions were essential for this experiment to be successful.

These conditions were:

- 1) Very good cuttings were used.
- 2) Long days were provided from September 23 to October 10, so adequate vegetative growth was assured.
- 3) A minimum night temperature of 65°F was maintained until mid-November.
- 4) Nutrients and water were in adequate supply.

There were some results which surprised us. Plants which were pinched on the same day as they were potted (September 23) were normally equal in quality to those pinched one week later, when more vigorous root systems could be expected.

This approach to scheduling does enable a grower to use cuttings which otherwise would



Figure 2. 'Eckespoint Red Sails' pinched on Sept. 23 (Left) or Sept. 30 (Right). Photo taken on December 10.

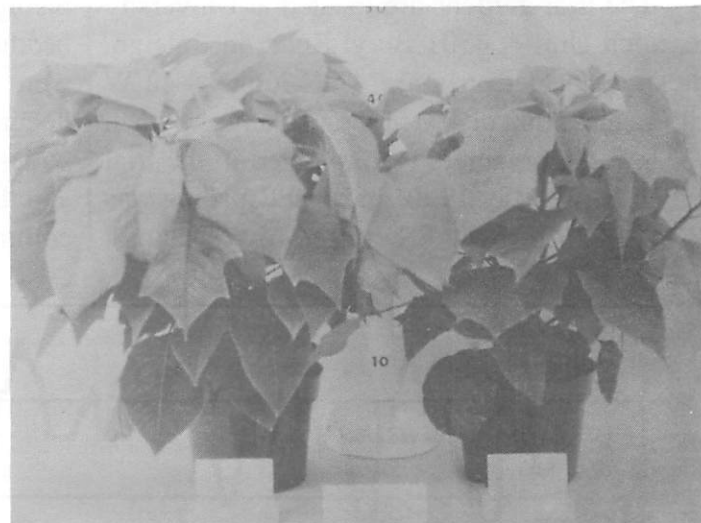


Figure 3. 'Gutbier V-14 Glory' pinched on Sept. 23 (Left) or Sept. 30 (Right). Photo taken on December 10.

have been discarded, or confined as single-stem plants. It also provides a supply of flowering plants for mid-December sales, if one should desire to have plants still available at that time.

We do not advocate this procedure for the majority of one's production, nor should one crowd plants which were propagated and pinched earlier, to make room for these "extras".