

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Appreciation for the Poinsettia

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My first trip ever for Ball Publishing was in December 2009, two months after I started. And since it was around the holidays, the whole point was to look at poinsettias. A lot of them. What felt to me at the time like miles and miles of them.

My familiarity with them didn't extend beyond what they looked like and when they were available in the stores. It took quite a few years to really learn the process by which all of these poinsettias went from the production farms outside of the U.S. to the growers to the stores, along with all of the headaches and pitfalls that happen in between.

Now I know enough to be dangerous and by no means could be left to my own devices in a greenhouse to try and grow my own crop of poinsettias. I leave that daunting task to you guys. But I now have a much greater appreciation for them. They're not in my Top 5 plants (and I prefer the novelties to plain ol' red ones), but what would the holidays be without

poinsettias? Very sad indeed.

GrowerTalks has covered poinsettia production, trials and new varieties for many decades. Some growers have since decided to forgo poinsettias during that time because the ultimate payoff wasn't worth the months of production (I've learned that poinsettias aren't the easiest crop to grow). But there are still quite a few of you out there who roll up your sleeves when the poinsettia cuttings start arriving and get to work. It's a noble cause to grow a months-long product that ends up selling for 99 cents on Black Friday.

I don't know how or when it happened—I think during one of our editorial meetings—but one of us had the bright idea of making the May issue The Poinsettia Issue starting this year. Traditionally, May is tough, not just because most of you don't get around to reading it until June, but because it's been difficult to pin down a theme and feature articles to go with it. After years of trying different things, we thought dedicating an entire issue to poinsettias would be good.

And it turned out to be true—the Average Joe on the street wouldn't believe there are so many aspects to growing a poinsettia, but this issue proves it. For the first issue of our 85th year, *GrowerTalks* has all things poinsettia for you this month, starting with new varieties you can start ordering when you read this.

One thing poinsettias are no strangers to are insects and diseases issues, but if you practice your preventative measures, you can usually fend off any huge problems. Read how to keep whiteflies at bay and protect from

diseases like *Alternaria*, *Xanthomonas* and *Botrytis*.

We also have information on avoiding heat delay and how doing a few low-dose “micro-drenches” of PGRs instead of one big one can help you get more uniform poinsettia plants while saving on inputs at the same time. Plus, production tips from stick to finish and how to create “specialty” poinsettias, like trees, topiaries and minis.

According to a quick Internet search, the poinsettia—being a native of Mexico—was considered by the ancient Aztecs to symbolize purity. In today’s “language of flowers,” the poinsettia is the December birth flower (my birth month!) and stands for good cheer, success and wishes of “mirth and celebration.” I think that makes me appreciate the poinsettia even more. **GT**