

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Do We Still Like Poinsettias?

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When visiting a handful of growers last year in New Jersey during Week 48, this is the question I posed to them. (When I said “we,” I meant them, their customers and consumers.)

A couple of them laughed before they answered. Or rolled their eyes. Mike DiGenova from Louis Davino Greenhouses was more direct: “No, I hate them.”

None of them particularly care for poinsettias, but they all admitted—even with all of their challenges and temperaments—poinsettias have to be part of their offering.

Mostly for three reasons: 1) Their customers want them; 2) the consumer still wants them; and 3) it keeps their employees busy all year round. When I was talking about this last point with Len DeGroot, he waved his hand, gesturing to a greenhouse bay,

and said, “If it wasn’t for poinsettias, all of this would be empty.”

Selecta’s Gary Vollmer knows poinsettias, so I asked him the same question during N.G. Heimos’ Poinsettia Open House. He feels people still do care about poinsettias and that sometimes our industry does them a disservice by not putting enough of an emphasis on using them for Thanksgiving. There’s quite a good selection of orange, burgundy and coral cultivars that could be used to decorate for a late-fall Thanksgiving table. He’s seeing more big box retailers using red poinsettias for early sales instead, which he thinks doesn’t present the consumer with much choice.

The fact that Black Friday is now pretty much spread out through the whole month of November allows for any type of retailer who sells poinsettias to offer more options. You can offer the \$1.99 regular 6-in. red poinsettia or the \$29.99 glittery painted one in the 10-in. container. You can offer the cute little 2-in. minis or create a poinsettia combo with English ivy, hypoestes, succulents or a houseplant (I saw all of those in some form this past winter).

Really, if you think about it, there are a lot of possibilities with poinsettias. And we probably haven’t even scratched the surface yet. Remember when painted poinsettias became a thing? Like them or not, they caused quite a stir when someone first came up with the idea and it gave another much-needed option for poinsettias other than just being ... meh.

Because there’s so much that goes into producing poinsettias, we’ve been dedicating our May issue to them for the last couple of years. We’ve got the latest on the newest cultivars for this coming holiday. And of course we have cultural info, including preventing Poinsettia Bract Edge Burn, using an agronomic approach to successful production and avoiding mildew problems.

Another thing we have this month is something kinda fun—Bossman Beytes sat down with three of the industry's top poinsettia experts (the aforementioned Gary Vollmer from Selecta, along with Rebecca Siemonsma from Express and Steve Rinehart of Rinehart Poinsettias) to discuss the poinsettia market and what they're seeing with regard to trends in breeding. Chris even put all three of them on the spot and asked each of them to name their favorite poinsettias from another breeder.

You may not love poinsettias—you may even have a very strong dislike for them—but you have to admit that while they're a part of your product offering, you might as well make the most of the new genetics and new ideas being developed to help get you through the season. Who knows? Maybe you'll learn to dislike them a little less. **GT**