GROWERTALKS

Features

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Setting Poinsettias Up for a Merry, Bright Season

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Poinsettias are the holiday crop that makes greenhouse growers look like magicians. When consumers walk into a garden center in November and see vibrant red, pink or white bracts glowing under the lights, they likely have little idea of the planning and daily decisions that made those plants successful.

But for growers, poinsettia excellence isn't seasonal luck. It's meticulous preparation, keen scouting and smart crop protection choices that start long before bracts turn color.

This year, growers have even more tools to protect their crop: The advanced insect control of XXpire insecticide; the broad-spectrum disease control of Floxcor fungicide; and the systemic reliability of Eagle 20EW specialty fungicide. Combined with proven cultural practices and a clear production plan, these solutions help growers reduce risk and deliver the quality that retailers demand.
But how should growers put it all into practice?

Start with a plan, not a panic
One of the biggest mistakes growers make is waiting until the crop is out of balance to react. Successful poinsettia production starts much earlier—sometimes even before cuttings arrive.

The first step is knowing your finishing specifications: pot size, plant height and branching density. Retail programs are more specific than ever and growers can't afford the guesswork that often leads to undersized plants or uneven canopies. Many greenhouse teams find it invaluable to use graphical tracking tools that compare real-time plant development against target growth curves and provide early warning when plants are trending too tall or too slow.

Once cuttings arrive, uniform rooting should be the priority. Strong root systems give plants the resilience they'll need later in the crop cycle when environmental control is more difficult and pest pressure increases.



Nutrition, temperature & light: The foundation
After rooting, growers shift into production mode, steering plants with nutrition, environment and spacing. Consistency is key. Unpredictable temperatures or irregular irrigation can slow growth or cause stress that shows up later as bract discoloration or delayed flowering.

Poinsettias are short-day plants; they need long, uninterrupted nights to initiate bract color. Even brief exposure to stray light—from an open door or a security light—can delay color development by weeks. That makes blackout curtains, thoughtful greenhouse scheduling and strict light control critical components of the crop protection program.

Healthy, mature plants with strong, dark bracts are the result of careful daily decisions, from humidity and daylength to nutrition and spacing. Each of these factors influences how well the crop responds when it's time for color.

Battle plans for bugs: Staying ahead of insects
Pest pressure never takes a holiday break. Whiteflies, thrips, aphids and other chewing or sap-feeding insects are among the top challenges greenhouse growers face during poinsettia production.

XXpire insecticide is a versatile tool for managing a broad spectrum of insect pests. This product combines two complementary active ingredients (sulfoxaflor and spinetoram) that target both chewing and sap-feeding insects, giving growers control of more than 39 insect pests common in ornamentals.

Unlike older, single-mode chemistries, the dual modes of action of XXpire help reduce the likelihood of insecticide resistance, a serious concern in intensive production systems where the same pests recur year after year.

Growers also appreciate that XXpire has shown minimal phytotoxicity in trials on hundreds of ornamental varieties—even on plants with sensitive foliage or bracts. Trials specifically on poinsettias have demonstrated good tolerance, with no visible leaf or bract spotting when applied at labeled rates.

That tolerance matters late in the crop cycle, when bracts are colored and marketability is on the line. The water-dispersible granule formulation makes XXpire easy to measure and mix, and its rapid action means growers start seeing control within hours of application.

But even the best products work better as part of a comprehensive program: Scout regularly, rotate modes of action and combine chemical and biological controls where appropriate. Prevention is always easier than remediation.

A two-pronged approach to disease management
Disease management in poinsettias isn't just about fighting pathogens; it's about preventing them from gaining a foothold.

Floxcor fungicide and Eagle 20EW specialty fungicide have quickly become valuable in ornamental disease programs. Each brings a distinct mode of action, giving growers greater flexibility and strength in their disease rotation plans.

Floxcor contains fluoxastrobin, a strobilurin fungicide that's rapidly taken up by the plant and moves systemically through the xylem, protecting both older and new growth. The 15-minute rainfast feature makes Floxcor especially useful in propagation, when young cuttings can be sensitive to overhead irrigation or misting. This broad movement within the plant helps stop diseases like Botrytis, powdery mildew and leaf spot in their tracks, giving growers powerful protection against numerous soil and foliar pathogens.

Because Floxcor moves quickly and is rainfast within minutes of application, it's well suited for ornamental crops that receive frequent irrigation or misting.

Eagle 20EW specialty fungicide, containing myclobutanil, provides systemic control of diseases like powdery mildew and black spot, and moves upward through new growth for up to 28 days with proper scheduling.

When used in rotation or as a tank mix, Floxcor and Eagle 20EW provide growers broad-spectrum disease control without some of the growth regulator effects often seen with other fungicides. This allows ornamentals to grow and flower normally, without the stunted growth patterns sometimes observed with other products.

In practice, a strong disease program might alternate Floxcor and Eagle 20EW on a 10- to 14-day schedule, paired with cultural controls such as adequate airflow, sanitation and humidity management to keep spores from reaching epidemic levels.

Keeping color vivid & canopies vibrant

By the time poinsettias near color, crop protection shifts from major cultural steering to fine-tuning. This is where integrated pest management, environmental control, and consistent insect and disease programs pay off.

Scouting becomes especially important at this stage. Minor whitefly populations can quickly increase under dense canopies and late-season diseases like powdery mildew thrive in humid, low-airflow conditions. Consistent use of tools—such as XXpire for pest control and Floxcor and Eagle 20EW for disease management—help mitigate these risks and preserve plant quality.

Uninterrupted dark periods remain non-negotiable this late in the cycle. Even brief night interruptions can delay bract color development by up to two weeks—time most growers can't afford.

Temperature and light management work hand in hand with crop protection decisions. Cooling nighttime temperatures within the recommended range supports pigment production and helps plants finish at the right size and color intensity.

The bottom line: Systems over silver bullets

There's no single product that guarantees a perfect poinsettia crop, but there are systems that reduce risk and improve outcomes.

Start with a plan that covers propagation through finishing and support it with daily scouting and strong cultural practices. Layer in trusted crop protection tools—such as XXpire for insect control and Floxcor plus Eagle 20EW for disease management— and you build resilience into the crop at every stage.

Growers who think ahead, scout often and use a diverse toolkit are the ones who deliver consistent, high-quality poinsettias year after year. When the holidays arrive and customers are greeted by vibrant bracts and vigorous plants, everyone from the grower to the consumer wins. **GT**

Broch Martindale is National Nursery & Greenhouse Strategic Account Manager for Corteva.

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