

# GROWERTALKS

## Inside Look

5/1/2023

### You Learn Something New Every Day

*Jennifer Zurko*



**JENNIFER ZURKO**

We've made the Poinsettia Open House at N.G. Heimos our annual November pilgrimage, where Chris and I jump into a company minivan and drive the four hours to the St. Louis area to see the hundreds of poinsettias produced by Amy Morris and her growing team.

The last few years, Ball's Market Research Manager and Hortistician Dr. Marvin Miller has come along for the ride, dealing with our music choices and illuminating us with his many industry tales. On the ride home after the open house in 2021, Marvin mentioned the "involucre" of the poinsettias that were in the trial. Chris and I thought he was making stuff up, but Marvin's not a regular leg-puller.

The definition of an involucre is "a whorl or rosette of bracts surrounding an inflorescence or at the base of an umbel." Apparently, all these years of walking into bays full of poinsettias I was surrounded by involucre and never knew it. I learned something new

in the minivan that day.

Don't feel bad if you've never heard the term—sometimes when Chris and I are visiting a greenhouse, he'll casually ask the grower how his involucre are doing, just to gauge their reaction. Many times he or she scrunch up their face and say, "Huh?"

Marvin went all the way in hort school, culminating in a doctorate in ag economics from the University of Florida and has been in the industry for over 35 years, so he's no rookie. But even he hadn't heard what an involucre was until he was talking to Dr. Brian Corr years ago, lamenting that there should be a name for the whole whorl of bracts on a poinsettia. Brian said there is—it's called an involucre. Since then, Marvin has been using the word to describe any whorl on a multitude of plants.

So, if you didn't know what an involucre was, you've learned something new today. You're welcome.

If you're looking to learn about more new stuff, you can see the new poinsettia cultivars we saw at the 2022 Heimos Open House. You can learn some tips on maintaining nutrition in your poinsettia crop and how many pinches it takes to make a tabletop poinsettia tree. I also gathered ways some growers are making their poinsettias a little more interesting at retail on page 48. And, of course, what would an issue all about poinsettias be if we didn't have whitefly

management in it?

Oh, and speaking of the inimitable Dr. Miller, he wrote a guest column for this issue about how our industry has continued to be innovative. This past year, we had some fun with Marvin and made a video of him explaining involucres at the Heimos Poinsettia Open House. [Watch “Marvin Teaches Us a New Term.”](#)

I challenge you to drop involucre into casual conversation while you're walking the greenhouse with your team. I'm sure some of them will appreciate learning a new horticulture term. **GT**