

POLLING POINSETTIAS / NEW VARIETIES BLOSSOM



J.D. Pooley/Sentinel-Tribune

Sue Baldwin, from Chardon, judges poinsettias during annual trials at Bostdorff Greenhouse

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Though you can never forget the standard red poinsettia, there are many more varieties and colors to the holiday plant than most would imagine.

On Tuesday, Bostdorff Greenhouse hosted its seventh "Poinsettia Trials." The event coordinated through Ohio State University and Ohio Florists Association, allowed breeders and growers throughout the area to come and look at 65 different "trial" varieties. There were 25 "experts" on hand Tuesday to rate the trials.

Among the new and unusual varieties were two rated at the top of the list in a similar trial held last month in Columbus for consumers.

Sonora White Glitter, described as a more tender variety of poinsettia, is basically a red holly-leaf poinsettia with white flecks. It is a cross between red and a marble.

The other most popular in the consumer trials

Red-dy or not

Poinsettias move beyond classic red to 'Premium Picasso' & 'Crazy Marble'

is called Premium Picasso.

Alicia Bostdorff-Timm, one of the owners at the greenhouse, says this is very popular because it changes colors over the season. The colored leaves, called bracts, start white, and turn more cinnamon as the pink starts showing on the edges until it takes over most of the bracts. As the season goes, the leaf grows darker.

Another unusual variety is unnamed, however Bostdorff-Timm expects to see more of it in following years. It is a winter rose type of poinsettia whose leaves grow more like a rose than a traditional poinsettia.

The most unusual in this year's trials is

called Christmas Time Crazy Marble. This variety features a holly-shape leaf and more colors than one would expect in a single plant. The predominantly pink bracts often have a cream edge; while the other leaves are a lighter green with a darker green edge.

"It's really hard to

describe," Bostdorff-Timm said.

For those not familiar with the holiday plant, the actual flowers of the poinsettia are not the colorful bracts, but rather the small berry-like centers of the bracts, called cyantha.

The trials, one of four for growers and breeders across the state, are held in addition to the consumer trials. Though Tuesday's event was held for the experts, the public can view and vote for their favorites throughout the holiday season at Bostdorff Greenhouse, 18862 N. Dixie Highway.

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Poinsettias

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"The traditional red will always be important, but it's losing ground," said Claudio Carlos Pasian, associate professor and Extension specialist in floriculture for OSU. "Each year there are more and more new cultivars."

Bostdorff-Timm agreed. "Red is still the most popular variety, but there are new and interesting colors each year."

She noted that the trend in Europe is returning to more intense, brighter colors, especially the reds, "more of a scarlet;" while Americans still prefer a deeper burgundy.

Steve Carver, with OFA, was on hand for the trials

Tuesday, and was pleased with the overall quality of the trials.

"Everything seemed to look good this year," Carver said. "Everybody has their personal likes and dislikes, and these trials help discover the favorites."

For the trials, the greenhouse is limited to 10 plants of each variety; however some are very similar if not identical to poinsettias already in production at the greenhouse.

For the season, Bostdorff features 5,000 flowers ready to be sold, the equivalent of what was sold last year. They feature 80 varieties including 23 different colors.

Though an amateur may only see a few colors, there are

six different reds; there is salmon, several varieties of pink and white; along with bicolors and other mixes.

"Everything is a hybrid," said Bostdorff-Timm.

Each flower for sale, including the trials, is grown at Bostdorff, with each getting its start from cuttings in late July or early August in preparation for the holiday season.

Bostdorff-Timm said she enjoys the trials because "It gives us a heads-up as to what's coming over the horizon."

By growing and evaluating the trial plants, they can better judge what to stock in upcoming seasons.