

TIME'S UP



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We've all heard how the life cycle for floriculture products is changing. Products used to have five or more years to conquer and rule a category; now, many argue, that time is closer to three years. If you've ever wondered how accurate that assertion is, I think, unfortunately, we might be about to find out with painted poinsettias.

Last year, painted poinsettias jumped onto the market in a big way. Sure, flower paint has been around for a while in Europe. Many of us have seen or heard about it for years, but last year was really the first push in our market. Despite purists (myself included) who disliked the look and the entire concept, painted poinsettias worked, meaning they sold.

Much higher prices (more than twice as much), increased sell through and renewed excitement for a stagnant crop caused everyone to jump on the painting bandwagon. This year, the second "real" year for painting in the United States, painted poinsettias are a major part of the market. I've talked to retailers this year who are stocking 20-30 percent of their total crop as painted. And the prices are worth it. My local grocery store is stocking 8-inch 'Plum Pudding' sprayed with glitter for \$16.99 each, and the independents are selling similar product for at least 20 percent more. These are impressive numbers. They are the kinds of numbers you would expect to see from a mature market...not one finishing up its second year.

Painting 2006

If good market penetration coupled with high prices really does indicate a mature market, one that has reached the top of its lifecycle, what does the future hold for painted poinsettias?

I've talked to a number of people about this topic, and everyone is hoping the same thing: that poinsettia painting will have a nice, long stay at the top and not become a fad. Ever cautious, I have my doubts. With as much margin as painting allows, undercutting must be pretty tempting, and before you know it, people will be offering painted poinsettias at cost just to attract sales. Hopefully, this won't happen, but we've seen it time and time again: vegetative geraniums, 4-inch material, store brands...

Garden centers have shown real interest in this product. Everyone from the best independent to Wal-Mart is stocking poinsettias and paying more for the privilege. The key to continued success with painted poinsettias will be patience. Grow your business as the market grows; you can't push it.

Thank You

Every year in the January issue, I close out my "Editor's Report" with a thank you to our subscribers and advertisers. This year is a bit different, though. Not only are we thankful for your continued loyalty, we also want to thank you for your vote of confidence. You see, we just received results from a blind readership study showing that *Lawn & Garden Retailer* is both the most-read and the most-useful trade magazine in the industry. Turn to page 6 to read more about this.

So especially this year, we are reminded how fortunate we are to have subscribers and advertisers like you. From the entire staff at *Lawn & Garden Retailer* (Carrie, Catherine, Diane, Felix, Kelley, Jan, Judy, Meghan, Tami and, of course, me): Thank you for your support. We wish you and yours a prosperous new year that fulfills all your wishes. ✂

Bridget C. White

By The Numbers

\$170: Rough value of the 2003 poinsettia crop in millions of dollars.

\$.85: Approximate cost to spray one 6-inch poinsettia.

\$15: Average retail price of a 6-inch red poinsettia.

\$20: And falling, average retail price of a 6-inch painted poinsettia in 2004.

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