



Agriculture & Horticulture  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



# New Project

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## PO 007

New Cultivars of Poinsettias.  
Evaluation at marketing and in shelf  
life

**Project Number:** PO 007

**Project Title:** New Cultivars of Poinsettias. Evaluation at marketing and in shelf life

**Project Leader:** Dr Jill England  
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**Contractor:** ADAS UK Ltd  
HK Consultancy  
The University of Warwick

**Industry Representative:** Ian Mills, Creswick Nurseries

**Start Date:** 1st July 2011

**End Date:** 31st March 2012

**Project Cost (total project cost):** £11,744 (£12,444)

**Project Summary:**

With the absence of UK based breeding programmes, UK growers have to base their decisions for testing new varieties on results of variety trials carried out by breeders in other European countries or in the US. The proposed project follows the approach taken by the Poinsettia group in previous years where a range of new material from across the breeding companies is tested for production on UK commercial nurseries. Material is tested for its attributes at marketing as well as performance in shelf life. The key difference in the current proposal, beyond the ongoing introduction of new varieties from the breeders, is the approach to the variety trial. In the current proposal, breeders will be contributing to the work via the supply of plants for assessment at the two host commercial sites and by underwriting loss of sales from these host sites. Furthermore the proposed work will, by design, involve less detailed recording than has been the case historically (e.g. PC 156, PC 156a, PC 279). It is clear that the detailed records of plant height, width, grade out of bract stars etc is not utilised by growers. Previous poinsettia variety trials have however generated significant interest at open days where growers can make their own judgements of the material grown on in UK production systems. To this end, assessments at marketing will be via broad grade out assessments. Varieties will also be tested in shelf life but again the extent of data recording will be limited to broad weekly evaluations which will indicate longevity along with comments about nature of failure in cases where quality significantly fails prior to the 6 week

shelf life evaluation period. The end result will therefore be clear messages about the varieties tested delivered to levy payers at two grower days as well as the standard HDC report. Activity on the Stars for Europe Scheme and on a project evaluating Hellebores will also be key activities in these grower based meetings.

### **Aims & Objectives:**

(i) Project aim(s):

The overall aim of the project is to identify new poinsettia varieties suited to UK production.

(ii) Project objective(s):

Evaluate new varieties of poinsettia for their overall performance in two UK production systems through assessment of overall quality achieved at marketing and also through evaluation of deterioration of plants in shelf life.

### **Benefits to industry**

The value of poinsettia production in the UK in 2011 was estimated at almost £9 million using plant propagator figures (pers comm.). The ability of growers to select and test new varieties with better marketing and post-harvest qualities will ensure their increased market share in a continuously expanding but competitive market.

These advantages will be particularly important against a background of increased competition from imported poinsettias using varieties tried and tested overseas. With the number of new varieties available to growers continually increasing, data on some of the most recent additions to the list of varieties will provide valuable information on the traits and performance of these alongside UK standard commercial varieties. This will enable growers to make informed decisions on what varieties will be best for them in the coming seasons.

Breeders involved in the trials will also be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of their varieties tested under a range of commercial conditions alongside those of their competitors. This will enable them to tailor future selections to cater more specifically for the UK poinsettia market.

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