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Fruehwirth

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(54) **POINSETTIA PLANT NAMED ‘ECKABIG’**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new and distinct cultivar of Poinsettia plant named ‘Eckabig’, characterized by its large showy dark red bracts; early flowering, response time about 8 weeks; dark green leaves with red purple petioles; upright and freely branching plant habit; and excellent postproduction longevity.

2 Drawing Sheets

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of Poinsettia plant, botanically known as *Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd., and hereinafter referred to by the name ‘Eckabig’.

The new cultivar is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the Inventor in Encinitas, Calif. The objective of the program is to create new Poinsettia cultivars having interesting bract and leaf display, color and form; strong and freely branching stems; and good postproduction longevity.

The new cultivar originated from a cross made by the Inventor of the Poinsettia cultivar ‘529’, disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 8,371, as the male, or pollen parent, with the proprietary selection identified as 587 as the female, or seed parent.

The cultivar ‘Eckabig’ was discovered and selected by the Inventor as a flowering plant within the progeny of the stated cross in a controlled environment in Encinitas, Calif. in December, 1996.

Asexual reproduction of the new Poinsettia by terminal cuttings taken at Encinitas, Calif., has shown that the unique features of this new Poinsettia are stable and reproduced true to type in successive generations of asexual reproduction.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be the unique characteristics of ‘Eckabig’. These characteristics in combination distinguish ‘Eckabig’ as a new and distinct cultivar:

1. Large showy dark red bracts.
2. Early flowering, response time about 8 weeks.
3. Dark green leaves with red purple petioles.
4. Upright plant habit.
5. Freely branching habit.
6. Excellent postproduction longevity.

In side-by-side comparisons conducted in Encinitas, Calif., plants of the new Poinsettia have darker red-colored bracts than plants of the female parent, the selection 587. Compared to plants of the male parent, the cultivar ‘529’,

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plants of the new Poinsettia have smaller and lighter-colored bracts and lighter-colored leaves.

Plants of the new Poinsettia can be compared to plants of the cultivar ‘490’, disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 7,825. However, in side-by-side comparisons conducted in Encinitas, Calif., plants of the new Poinsettia differed from plants of ‘490’ in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Poinsettia are slightly taller and more upright than plants of ‘490’.
2. Plants of the new Poinsettia are not as freely branching as plants of ‘490’.
3. Plants of the new Poinsettia have longer and thicker petioles than plants of ‘490’.
4. Flower bract color of the new Poinsettia is more crimson red, than flower bract color of ‘490’.
5. Plants of the new Poinsettia flower later than plants of ‘490’.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the overall appearance of the new Poinsettia, showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type.

The photograph at the top of the first sheet comprises a side perspective view of a typical plant of ‘Eckabig’.

The photograph at the bottom of the first sheet comprises a top perspective view of a typical plant of ‘Eckabig’.

The photograph on the second sheet is a close-up view of typical bracts and leaves of ‘Eckabig’ (left) and ‘490’ (right). Bract and foliage colors in the photographs may differ from actual colors due to light reflectance.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The new Poinsettia has not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary somewhat with variations in environment such as temperature, daylength and light intensity, without, however, any variance in genotype. The following observations and measurements describe plants grown in Encinitas, Calif., under commercial practice in a glass-covered greenhouse with day temperatures ranging from 21 to 27° C., night temperatures ranging from 18 to 20° C., and light

levels about 4,000 foot-candles. Plants were grown in 16-cm pots, pinched one time, and flowered under naturally lengthening nights during the fall/early winter.

In the following description, color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart except where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used.

Botanical classification: *Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd. 'Eckabig'.

Parentage:

Male parent.—*Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd. '529', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 8,371.

Female parent.—Proprietary selection of *Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd. identified as 587.

Propagation:

Type cutting.—Terminal cuttings.

Time to initiate roots.—Summer: About 7 days at 24° C. Winter: About 10 days at 22° C.

Time to develop roots.—Summer: About 26 days at 24° C. Winter: About 26 days at 22° C.

Rooting habit.—Freely branching, becoming fibrous with development.

Plant description:

Plant form.—Inverted triangle.

Growth habit.—Upright. Freely branching. Branching is enhanced by removing the shoot apex.

Plant vigor.—Moderate.

Plant height.—About 28 cm.

Crop time.—From unrooted cuttings to a flowering plant in a 16-cm container, about 16 weeks are required.

Stem description.—Strong, thick stems. Number of lateral branches: About six lateral branches are formed after removal of the terminal apex. Lateral branch length: About 21 cm. Internode length: About 1.5 cm. Stem color: 146A to 146B.

Foliage description.—Quantity of leaves per lateral branch: About 9. Length: About 12.5 cm. Width: About 8.5 cm. Shape: Ovate to lobed. Apex: Acuminate. Base: Rounded to acute. Margin: Entire. Texture: Smooth, dull; very sparse pubescence on lower surface. Color: Young foliage, upper surface: 147A. Young foliage, lower surface: 147B. Mature foliage, upper surface: Darker than 147A. Mature foliage, lower surface: 137A. Venation, upper surface: 147B.

Venation, lower surface: 137C. Petiole: Length: About 5.5 cm. Diameter: About 3 mm. Color: 59A.

Inflorescence description:

Inflorescence type and habit.—Inflorescences are compound corymbs of cyathia with colored flower bracts subtending the cyathia.

Natural flowering season.—Autumn/winter in Northern Hemisphere. Flower initiation and development can be induced under long night conditions. Response time is about 8 weeks.

Quantity of inflorescences.—One per lateral branch, usually about six per plant.

Inflorescence size including bracts.—Diameter: About 28 cm. Height (depth): About 5.5 cm.

Flower bracts.—Quantity of flower bracts per inflorescence: Usually about 11 primary bracts and about 6 to 10 smaller secondary bracts per inflorescence. Length, largest bracts: About 15 cm. Width, largest bracts: About 10.5 cm. Shape: Ovate to lobed. Apex: Acuminate. Base: Acute. Margin: Entire. Texture: Smooth. Aspect: Held mostly horizontal. Color: Developing, upper surface: Brighter than 53A. Developing, lower surface: 46A to 46B. Mature, upper surface: 45A, becoming 53B with subsequent development. Mature, lower surface: 53B.

Cyathia.—Quantity: Usually about 10 per corymb. Diameter of cyathia cluster: About 2 by 2.5 cm. Length: About 9 mm. Width: About 5 mm. Color: Immature: 144A. Mature: 144A to 144B. Peduncle: Length: About 5 mm. Aspect: Strong, erect. Color: 144B. Stamens: Stamen number: Ten to twelve true stamens with numerous stamenodes per cyathium. Anther length: About 1 mm. Anther shape: Oval. Anther color: 26A to 26B darkening to 45A. Amount of pollen: Scarce. Pollen color: 7A to 7B. Pistils: No pistillate flowers observed. Nectary color: 10A.

Disease resistance: Plants of the new Poinsettia have not been observed to be resistant to pathogens common to Poinsettias.

Postproduction longevity: Excellent; generally plants maintain good substance and bract color for about eight weeks under interior conditions.

It is claimed:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of Poinsettia plant named 'Eckabig', as illustrated and described.

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