

STANDING CYPRESS: A POTENTIAL NEW SPECIALTY CUT FLOWER CROP

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Standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra* (L.) Wherry), a member of phlox family, is native to North America and grows up to West Texas. It produces a thyrse-like attractive panicle consisting of 1-3 flowered cymose inflorescences with scarlet-yellow-red flowers on a long axis with dark green pinnately parted leaves. Herein, we report our preliminary observations relating to postharvest performance of cut flowering stems of this plant. The flowers were found to be relatively more tolerant to ethylene than phlox and pretreatment with 1-MCP or STS prevented corolla abscission and slightly delayed flower senescence. Incorporation of sucrose in the vase solution dramatically promoted opening of new flower buds, delayed flower abscission and senescence, and greatly improved vase life and longevity. Plants grown from seeds collected from a wild population exhibited variation in their vigor, branching, length of flowering axis, flower size and color. Selection and breeding efforts are underway to further improve plant growth, flower quality and display life of cut flowering axis.