



**Standing more than six feet tall,
Cotinus makes a big impression
at SAF's Outstanding Varieties
Competition, winning the
coveted title of Best in Show.**

COTINUS TOWERS ABOVE

Striking, luscious and a wedding workhorse. Cotinus, a decorative foliage from The Sun Valley Group in Arcata, California, enchanted judges with its flawless — and functional — form, earning top honors in the Society of American Florists' 2019 Outstanding Varieties Competition.

Standing more than six feet tall, Cotinus literally towered over the other entrants, making a memorable first impression. A closer examination revealed strong and straight stems, as well as glossy, blemish-free leaves with delicate red etchings for added visual interest. Most of all, though, judges identified so many potential applications, particularly for weddings and events.

Let's start with Cotinus's size, which judge Richard Brittingham, of Pennock Floral in Miami, Florida, described as "gargantuan — something you'd see in the MGM Grand." That size comes in handy when you need centerpieces proportional for a cavernous ballroom, or want to conceal cords, speakers and other unsightly equipment entertainers have scattered in front of the stage. It's also an asset for designing large décor, including the ever-popular floral arches, chandeliers, hoops and garlands.

"It is an event designer's dream," said judge Heather Waits, of Bloomtastic Florist in Columbus, Ohio. "There's just so much you can do with it!" judge Lani Callister, of Ensign Wholesale Floral in Salt Lake City, Utah, agreed. "We buy Cotinus all the time," she said. "When event planners see it, they go wild."

Cotinus's smoldering color also provides a host of possibilities. Mix it with proteas, heliconia, birds of paradise and celosia and you have a contemporary, exotic style. Next to pale pink peonies, garden roses, ranunculus and stock, Cotinus looks feminine and romantic — and satisfies the palette du jour. "It's so versatile," said judge Rita Jo Shoultz, of Alaska Perfect Peony in Fritz Creek, Alaska. "Absolutely on trend," said judge Dan Vordale, of Ocean View Flowers in Lompoc, California.



BEST IN SHOW
Cotinus
Sun Valley
Floral Group

A bonus? Cotinus has a vase life of 10 days. "You could use this as a shop window display a whole week before an event," said judge Manny Gonzales, of Mayesh Wholesale in Charleston, South Carolina. "That's incredible value — and a conversation starter."

Lane DeVries, president and CEO of The Sun Valley Group, knew that he had a winner on his hands with Cotinus. Midway through its season (May through November), "it was in its prime," he said. "I had to show it off!" Plus, increasing customer demand over the past two to three years made him confident Cotinus would score highly because of its marketability. "Foliage is *in*," he said emphatically.

The SAF 2019 Outstanding Varieties Competition drew 211 entries from 31 growers and breeders in Florida, California, Oregon and Hawaii, as well as Colombia, Ecuador, Israel and the Netherlands. Nine judges — an appointed panel of growers, wholesalers and retailers — scored each entry based on color and commercial appeal, stem and foliage, bloom form and size, and overall presentation. Judges evaluated specific categories of flowers; the highest scored entry of each won "Best in Class." The judges collectively assessed these winners, naming Cotinus the best of the best.

Read on for the competition's other top performers.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

The Society of American Florists thanks the many people who made this year's competition a success, including Chrysal, Syndicate Sales and our panel of judges. Find out more at safnow.org/moreonline.



Best in Class



Dianthus

'DAMASCUS', DÜMMEN ORANGE

"How distinctive!" Callister said of this white carnation with aubergine edges. "Novelty varieties have great consumer appeal," she said, adding that it's a versatile variety that would pair beautifully with lavender, burgundy and many shades of pink. "The petals formed very nicely and it's larger than average, which customers will appreciate," said judge Karen Fountain, AAF, of Flowers 'n Ferns in Burke, Virginia.

Alstroemeria

'CLARICE', NATURAL FLOWERS

"I'm impressed with this variety's long laterals and number of blossoms per stem," said judge Eileen Looby Weber, AAF, of Lake Forest Flowers in Lake Forest, Illinois. "It's very user friendly." Judge Bonny Dougherty, of Glad-A-Way Gardens in Santa Maria, California, praised its consistent burgundy striping — that detail, against vibrant magenta petals, provides "marvelous presentation," she said. "You could use 'Clarice' 100 different ways," said Gonzales. One of them: restaurant bud vases. "Elegant, easy and cost-effective," he said.

Other

'XL PURE WHITE'

HYDRANGEA, GROFLOWERS

An "exceptional" head size and high petal count scream "special occasion" for Fountain. "It's absolutely stunning," she said. "I'd love to use this in an anniversary arrangement or in bridal pieces." Callister took note of the pure white color. "This is a rare find," she said. "Most varieties are creamy." She also admired the sturdy stems, "good for supporting such a massive head," she said. Shoultz noticed a subtle green center — "a nice detail that blends with everything."

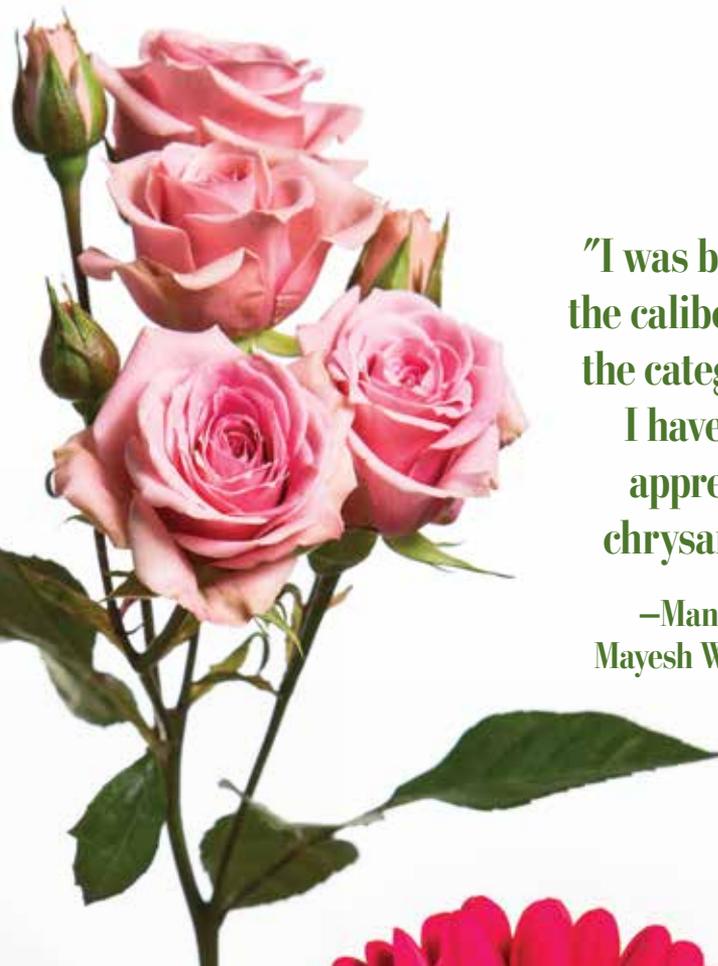
Rose

'QUEEN BERRY', CONTINENTAL FARMS

Vordale and Brittingham both applauded 'Queen Berry's' saturated color. "You usually see some variation in tones," said Brittingham, who grew roses for nearly 30 years before transitioning to the wholesale side of the industry. He also admired its wide aperture, strong stems and clean foliage. Waits found a new staple for her shop. "We sell almost as many hot pink roses as we do 'Freedom' roses," she said.

Best in Class





"I was blown away by the caliber of entries in the category I judged. I have newfound appreciation for chrysanthemums."

**—Manny Gonzales,
Mayesh Wholesale Florist**



Garden Rose

'BELLALINDA CERISE', FRESCA FARMS

"This is just delicious," Waits said of this cherry-colored garden spray, adding that her younger customers adore bright, cheery hues. "It will be a hit for homecoming and prom, especially with those long laterals." Brittingham counted 16 flowers on one stem. "You could easily make 50-60 boutonnières with one bunch," he said. "Or use it as a substitute for a dozen roses."

Chrysanthemum

'SHORTCAKE', DELIFLOR

LATIN AMERICA

"I was so mesmerized by this entry that I just stared at it for a few minutes," said Dougherty. She particularly loved its high number of flowers per stem and perky coloring. "You don't need anything else to make an impression." Weber, too, praised its presentation. "That variegated coloring gives it visual interest," she said, adding that she'd use it either in a grab 'n go bouquet or an arrangement with "more exclusive" flowers, such as 'Green Trick' dianthus, scabiosa, stock and hydrangeas.

Cut Bulb

'PAPOSA' LONGIFLORUM ORIENTAL

HYBRID LILY, OREGON FLOWERS

"A classic lily with year-round appeal," said Weber, who envisions using 'Paposa' in sympathy designs, holiday pieces and daily arrangements. "The size of the blooms really stands out," Gonzales said. Dougherty appreciated that the stems were sturdy, strong and proportional for the robust flowers. "That bright white is quite stunning too," she said. "It feels clean, calming and peaceful."

Spray Rose

'SWEET SENSATION',

EQUIFLOR – RIO ROSES

"Look at those bracts and blooms!" said Fountain. "This is a very functional flower for a retail florist." And its bubblegum complexion adds great appeal, she said: "When customers ask for 'pink,' this is usually what they have in mind." Callister appreciated its broad applications. "It's obviously very good for corsages and boutonnières," she said. "But it would work just as well for sympathy work."

Gerbera

'LANDMARK', KITAYAMA BROTHERS

"I love how the head stays upright. And that watermelon color is just phenomenal," said Weber. "It would be the perfect addition for a birthday or get-well arrangement." Gonzales spied a favorite flower for Gen Y and Gen Z customers. "It has a very youthful aesthetic," he said. Dougherty praised its petal formation and stems. "It's perfection," she said.

Blue Ribbon Winners

ROSES

'ARCTICA', THE ELITE FLOWER

"These heads are incredible — the size of lemons," Brittingham said. "Additionally, the pure white color is very sophisticated and in high demand."

'BREATHLESS', THE ELITE FLOWER

Brittingham praised this rose's dusty pink color. "It's not a true pink or lavender," he said. "Those 'tweener' shades are very useful for bridging different palettes."

'CASHMERE', THE ELITE FLOWER

"This is a fantastic flower," Vordale said. "Beautiful shape, large head, strong stems and clean foliage. Plus it's white — a color that's always in high demand. All this makes 'Cashmere' a top commodity."

'COUNTRY BLUES', THE ELITE FLOWER

"This entry fooled me," Waits said. "I totally thought it was a garden rose!" This premium-looking variety jumped straight to the top of her wish list. "My customers will love this, especially next to mini green hydrangeas."

'COUNTRY HOME', THE ELITE FLOWER

Brittingham estimated that each head had more than 100 petals, giving 'Country Home' a gorgeous presentation. Vordale homed in on the peachy-pink color — "very on trend," he said — and chartreuse guard petals, "which add a special touch."

'ARCTICA'

'BREATHLESS'

'NOVIA'

'COUNTRY BLUES'

'MARZIPAN'





'CASHMERE'



'POMAROSA'



'COUNTRY HOME'



'SOUL'



'GISELE'



'ROSE CANDLELIGHT'



'POMPEII'



'MAGIC TIMES'

'GISELE', CONTINENTAL FARMS

"I noticed this yellow from across the room," Vordale said. "It's just brilliant and customers want it all year round. We're growing more yellow next year because the demand's so high." Brittingham concurred. "It's the color of friendship — something you'd use every day. It's a 10 all the way!"

'MAGIC TIMES', THE ELITE FLOWER

Waits gushed over the enticing peppermint-like bi-coloring. "It's very sweet," she said. "This would be stunning for a sweet sixteen celebration or a first date."

'MARZIPAN', ESPRIT MIAMI

This blush rose opens to reveal a faint ballet-slipper pink. "That two-tone quality is really cool," Waits said. "It's perfect for brides who want a watercolor effect."

'NOVIA', CONTINENTAL FARMS

"The ultimate spring rose," Waits said. "It would look really pretty with stock, anemones, sweet peas and lilac." Brittingham and Vordale envisioned new baby arrangements when they saw this pale pink.

'POMAROSA', JET FRESH FLOWER DISTRIBUTORS

Vordale scored 'Pomarosa' highly for marketability. "In my business, we offer five shades of pink stock," he said. "This matches the one that's, by far, the most popular." Brittingham praised its size. "It has a 10-centimeter head," he said. "That's unheard of!"

'POMPEII', ROSAPRIMA

"I go nuts for green guard petals," Vordale said. "This has a nice antique look." Brittingham admired the guard petals too, but noticed that, once removed, 'Pompeii' looked remarkably similar to two of the most popular roses on the market ('Sahara' and 'Quicksand'). "This is a great substitute," he said.

'ROSE CANDLELIGHT', ROSAPRIMA

"The perfect specimen," Brittingham said of this lush, creamy variety. "It opens so fully. It reminds me of something in my grandmother's garden."

'SOUL', THE ELITE FLOWER

"My brides will love, love, love this!" Waits said. "This will be our shop's new ivory rose."

GARDEN ROSES

'CANDLELIGHT', EQUIFLOR – RIO ROSES
"This is a very high-end rose," Brittingham said. "Its glossy foliage only adds to its appeal."

'MAYRA'S ROSE', ALEXANDRA FARMS
"Absolutely gorgeous," Vordale said of this medium pink, rosette-shaped garden rose. "It also has a strong stem, great foliage and a pleasant fragrance."

'PRINCESS HITOMI', ALEXANDRA FARMS
Vordale applauded the large head size and strong stem. "It's a nice mid pink, too," he said.

'ROSE ELLA' (AUSWAGSY), ROSAPRIMA
"Brides will drool over this buttery yellow," Waits said. "It opens so beautifully." Brittingham and Vordale scored it highly for its large, wide head. "It's a cost-effective choice," Vordale said. "You only need five stems and you have a bridal bouquet," Brittingham said.

'PRINCESS HITOMI'

'MAYRA'S ROSE'

'ROSE ELLA'

'CANDLELIGHT'

'ROYAL PORCELINA'

SPRAY ROSES

'ROYAL PORCELINA', ESPRIT MIAMI
With seven blooms per stem, 'Royal Porcelina' has a sumptuous presentation left as is — and great value for designing personal flowers. "I would definitely use this for weddings, prom, homecoming and Valentine's Day," Fountain said.





'COMPETITION'



'ANOUSKA'

BULBS

'ANOUSKA' ORIENTAL ROSELILY, THE SUN VALLEY GROUP

'Anouska', a pink and white double lily, impressed judges — and other convention attendees — with its strong stems and large flower heads that stood exceptionally upright to win the People's Choice award. "It's mind-boggling," Gonzales said. "There are just so many flowers. This would instantly upgrade any arrangement."

'CIMONE' ORIENTAL TRUMPET HYBRID LILY, THE SUN VALLEY GROUP

"This variety just looks enchanting," Dougherty said. "There are many flowers per stem, creating a lot of depth."

'COMPETITION' ORIENTAL TRUMPET HYBRID LILY, OREGON FLOWERS

"This was my favorite entry," Gonzales said, praising the vibrant color that falls between pink and red, "with a beautiful celadon center." He especially liked its large, showy presentation. "Take one stem, add some lily grass and you're done," he said.

'ISABELLA' ROSELILY, ESPRIT MIAMI

"This looks like something out of a fairytale," Dougherty said of this feminine double lily. "It's a conversation starter," Weber said.

'MAXIMA' ORIENTAL ROSELILY, THE SUN VALLEY GROUP

"This is ready to go for Christmas," Gonzales said. "Add any red flower. It will look amazing."

'MYTH' ORIENTAL TRUMPET HYBRID LILY, KITAYAMA BROTHERS

"I love how the flowers are spread out on the stem," Weber said. "It makes design work easier." Gonzales saw this as a great funeral flower. "The blooms are so large you could see them across the room," he said.

'RED EYES' ORIENTAL LILY, OREGON FLOWERS

"This reminds me of a starfish," Dougherty said. "It has an exotic, 'under the sea' look to it." Weber admired its shape, coloring, size and flower count. "It would be an easy way to enhance a dozen red roses for Valentine's Day," she said.



'MAXIMA'



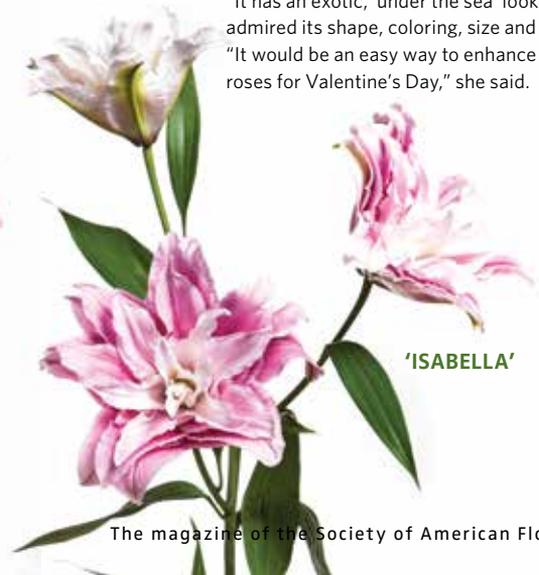
'RED EYES'



'CIMONE'



'MYTH'



'ISABELLA'

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

'ABBEY YELLOW', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

"This has a nice feathery texture," Weber said. "It'd look great with hypericum berries and roses in a low mounded design."

'BLAZE', MULTIFLORA CORPORATION

Weber envisioned arranging 'Blaze' in a pumpkin, along with crespedia, thistle and ilex berries. "Customers would go wild for all that texture!" she said. She also plans to use it in fall design classes. "Those have a low margin for profits, so cost-effective flowers like chrysanthemums are great," she said. "Plus, they last a long time, which is a good selling point for participants."

'CLOVER', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

"This is a very intriguing shade — citrusy but not quite lime," Gonzales said. Dougherty liked the way its petals formed. "They cup into a bowl shape rather than spreading out," she said. "That gives it a unique presentation."

'EMPRESS', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

"This will kill for Mother's Day," Gonzales said. Weber spied a great substitute for dahlias. "Its green center gives it an antique look, which is very popular," she added.

'GAVIRIA', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

"This is a flawless burgundy," Dougherty said. "It reflects the light beautifully." Weber considered 'Gaviria' a sophisticated choice for fall. "Paired with antique hydrangea it would look really striking," she said.

'HOLANDA', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

Gonzales counted 15 blooms per stem. "It's a very user friendly and cost-effective variety, plus the mango color is just cool," he said. "In the right hands, this could be something very special."



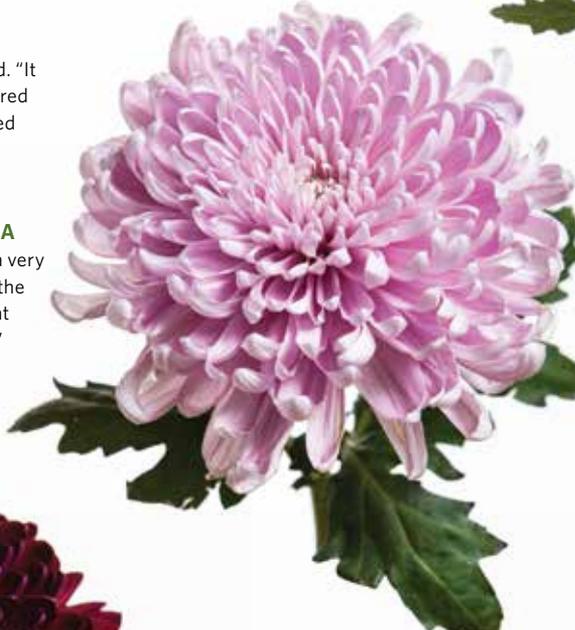
'MAGNUM SPIDER'



'MAGNUM WHITE FOOTBALL'



'TANANA'



'MAGNUM ROSY FOOTBALL'
Gardens America



'EMPRESS'



'GAVIRIA'



'MAGNUM ROSY FOOTBALL'
Deliflor Latin America



'ABBEY YELLOW'



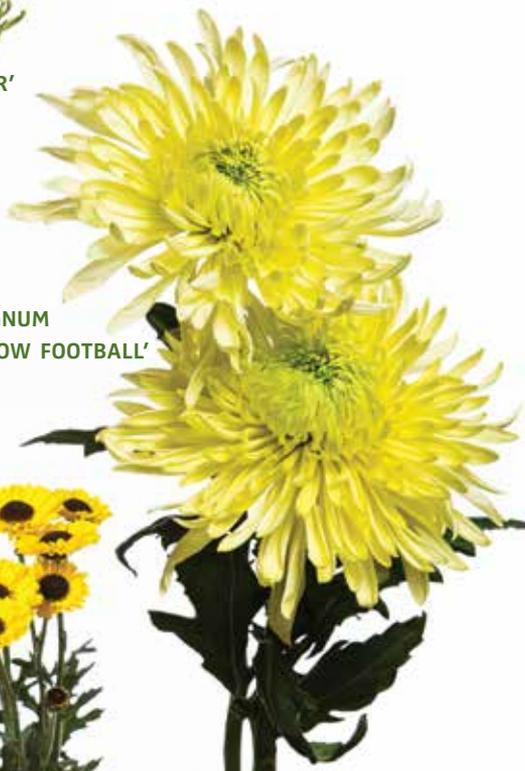
'HOLANDA'



'BLAZE'



'CLOVER'



'MAGNUM
YELLOW FOOTBALL'



'OKIDOKI'

**'MAGNUM ROSY FOOTBALL',
DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA**

"The size, shape and consistency of petals gives this entry a fluffy romantic look that could be used in place of dahlias or peonies," Weber said. Those same qualities make it a good choice for establishing mass in event or corporate pieces.

**'MAGNUM ROSY FOOTBALL',
GARDENS AMERICA**

"Robust head, glossy foliage and a pure lavender — this variety has given me new appreciation for chrysanthemums," Gonzales said.

**'MAGNUM SPIDER', DELIFLOR
LATIN AMERICA**

"Can't you just see this in a 4th of July arrangement?" Dougherty said. "It literally looks like a firework!"

**'MAGNUM WHITE FOOTBALL',
DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA**

"The size is incredible," Dougherty said. "I love the deep, layered aesthetic. And that green center really pops against the white petals."

**'MAGNUM YELLOW FOOTBALL',
GARDENS AMERICA**

"This crisp, bright yellow lends itself to clean, contemporary designs," Gonzales said. "I could see this at a hip South Beach restaurant."

'OKIDOKI', LIBERTY BLOOMS

Dougherty applauded the flowers' consistency and called its overall presentation "cute." Weber appreciated its long laterals, which she'd snip to use in a low, mounded centerpiece or on a mini pumpkin. "It looks just like a miniature sunflower," she said. "Customers would love it."

'TANANA', DELIFLOR LATIN AMERICA

"Ten to 12 blooms per stem come together to form one giant flower," Gonzales said. "That coverage would be absolutely perfect for designing a large white cross for sympathy work," Weber said.

DIANTHUS

'CAMEL', CONTINENTAL FARMS

"My favorite carnation!" Callister exclaimed. "It's large, sturdy and an awesome antique peach." She recommends it for vintage weddings, fall arrangements or masculine sympathy work.

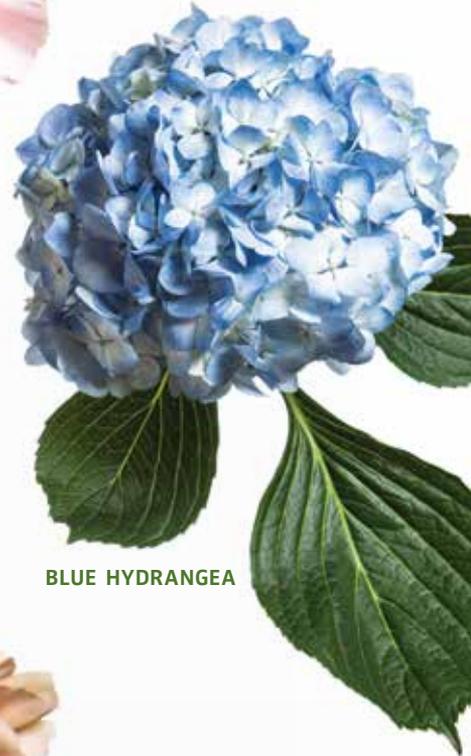
'MOJITO', DÜMMEN ORANGE

"It's bolder than previous greens," Callister said, adding that she's seen increased demand for "anything" green, as consumers clamor for potted plants, terrariums and foliage varieties. "I imagine it being a staple from Christmas throughout the spring," Fountain said.

'TRADITION', DÜMMEN ORANGE

"Its name says it all," Fountain said. "This is a classic variety. I use it all the time. Customers adore its vase life."

'TRADITION'



BLUE HYDRANGEA



'CAMEL'



'MOJITO'



'WHITE VICTORY'



'CLONI
SUCCESS
HANOI'

OTHER CUTS

PINK HYDRANGEA

BELLS OF IRELAND, CONTINENTAL FARMS

"Nothing else compares," Shultz said. "It's greenery and a flower in one! And it won't clash with anything." Fountain appreciated how straight the flowers grew. "I rarely see bells of Ireland this good," she said.

'BLUE VICTORY' VERONICA, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"The texture provides great visual interest," Fountain said. "I like that there are small spikes below the main one."

'WHITE VICTORY' VERONICA, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"This is truly top notch veronica," Callister said. "My customers would love it."

'CLONI SUCCESS HANOI' RANUNCULUS, EQUIFLOR – RIO ROSES

"I considered this a contender for Best in Class," Callister said. "It has a superb shape and very strong stem, and its color could be manipulated to be blush or peach."

'ELEGANCE VIOLA' RANUNCULUS, CONTINENTAL FARMS

"It's hard to find flowers in this deep eggplant shade," Shultz said. "I can see this at weddings, homecoming and prom, or any party really," Fountain said.

BLUE HYDRANGEA, GROFLOWERS

"This variety looks very clean," Shultz said. "It would look outstanding with white roses or lilies."

PINK HYDRANGEA, FRESCA FARMS

The leaves bowed over Shultz and Fountain. "Usually, hydrangeas' foliage is so huge you have to remove them, but these are proportional and very healthy looking," Shultz said. Fountain admired the delicate vining on the leaves.

BELLS OF IRELAND

'ELEGANCE VIOLA'

'BLUE VICTORY'

PURPLE HYDRANGEA, FRESCA FARMS

"This is a very versatile color that blends with a lot," Fountain said. "That said, I'd love to put it in a cobalt vase all by itself."

'KAPOHO WELO' ANTHURIUM, GREEN POINT NURSERIES

"This is a beautiful coral that matches Pantone's color of the year," Callister said, praising 'Kapoho Welo's' marketability. "Its form is very good as well."

'MAGICAL BLUE LAGOON' ERYNGIUM, THE ELITE FLOWER

"I used to grow eryngium and I hated them because it hurt to handle them," Shultz said. "This variety, though, isn't prickly at all! It looks lovely with peonies." Fountain liked the flower size and many bracts. "It's an economical flower to have in your shop," she said.

'MAGICAL CHARM' HYDRANGEA, THE ELITE FLOWER

"The perfect choice for a customer who loves hot pink," Shultz said.

'MAGICAL TENDER LOVE' HYDRANGEA, THE ELITE FLOWER

Shultz awarded this variety high marks for its large head, proportional leaves and bruise-free petals. "For a bride on a tight budget, one bloom is plenty for a bridesmaid bouquet," Fountain said, adding that it would complement dresses in many shades of pink or green.

'MAGICAL TROPHY' HYDRANGEA, THE ELITE FLOWER

"This maroon variety looks like it has a lot of depth to it, which ups its perceived value," Shultz said. "It would look fabulous in a mantelpiece design for Christmas," Fountain said.



'MAGICAL TENDER LOVE'

'SWEET ROMANCE'



'KAPOHO WELO'

'PINK VICTORY'



'MAGICAL CHARM'

'ROCKY ROMANCE'

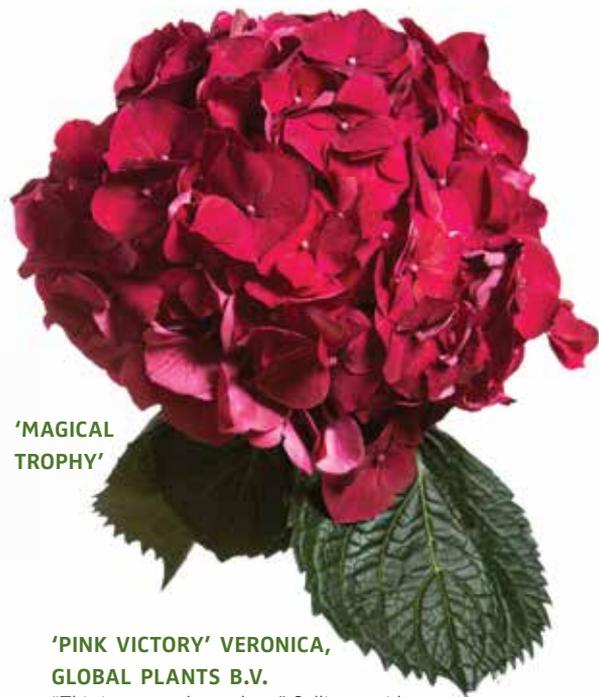




'SALMON SPIRIT'



'TRUE ROMANCE'



'MAGICAL TROPHY'



PURPLE HYDRANGEA



'SEA WALTZ'

'PINK VICTORY' VERONICA, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"This is top grade product," Callister said. "Sometimes veronica has tiny, poor foliage — but not this one!"

'ROCKY ROMANCE' HYPERICUM, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"This looks like an actual edible berry," Shoultz said. "It would be really incredible for any Christmas design."

'SALMON SPIRIT' ILEX, THE SUN VALLEY GROUP

"Texture, texture, texture — this makes any design more interesting," Callister said. Fountain made a note to order this variety as soon as she returned home. "If this doesn't shout 'fall,' what does?" she said. She plans to pair it with orange lilies and 'Circus' roses. To extend its appeal into spring, Shoultz recommends including it in designs with daffodils and tulips.

'SEA WALTZ' DELPHINIUM, EQUIFLOR – RIO ROSES

"A statement flower with great height, this is about the most perfect delphinium you'll ever see," Callister said. Fountain, who does a ton of patriotic arrangements at Arlington National Cemetery, plans to use this variety often.

'SWEET ROMANCE' HYPERICUM, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"This is the embodiment of Pantone's 'Living Coral.' People love this color," Callister said. Fountain appreciated its versatility. "It blends very well with coral, peach and bubblegum pink," she said.

'TRUE ROMANCE' HYPERICUM, GLOBAL PLANTS B.V.

"This is a great cherry red with year-round appeal," Callister said. 🍒

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'MAGICAL BLUE LAGOON'