

ELLE DECOR

FLOWERS BY BOTANICALS INC., CHICAGO



CASEY COOPER OF BOTANICALS INC., CHICAGO

BEST OF THE BUNCH

In the beginning, FTD said it with baby's breath. Eventually, though, we all started to yearn for something more sophisticated. Sculptural, high-style arrangements answered that need for awhile, but now we've moved on. Six floral designers from across the country are pointing us in the right direction.



MOTHER NATURE, CASEY COOPER OF Botanicals thinks small. In flowers as in office buildings, Chicago usually goes for tall, with soaring branches and flamboyant feathers. Not Casey Cooper. "I like the really packed look, the more flowers the better," she says. "It's the luxury of cramming." Her aesthetic is gradually catching on, making Botanicals -- her business in the Windy City's artsy Wicker Park neighborhood -- the most sought-out in town. In addition to doing luncheons for Marshall Field's and the 1999 gala for the Joffrey Ballet, she's especially popular for weddings,

whether the venue is the Prairie Style interior of Cafe Brauer or the ornate Gold Coast Room at the Drake Hotel. One Botanicals signature is multiple arrangements of the same flower in progressive stages of development, from buds at one end of the table to full-blown blooms at the other. Depending on the season and the setting, Cooper might build a pyramid of lemons and roses to liven up a display of place cards or fill an antique urn with Leonidas roses, grapes, and eucalyptus leaves. "Chartreuse is a very important color for fall," she says. "I try not to get too orange and yellow." ■