



FLOWERS BY BOTANICALS INC., CHICAGO



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Deep Hues Color Holiday Flowers

BY ANNE SPISELMAN

WHEN IT COMES TO FLOWERS, PEOPLE still are seeing red — but traditional holiday color combinations are giving way to newer looks, according to Chicago-area floral designers. They are experimenting with more modern arrangements and lavish presentations that use plenty of flowers, often without greenery.

As for color, designers have embraced deep hues such as fuchsia, raspberry, red and burgundy, and also are trying monochromatic compositions.

"I can't remember when I last used red roses," says Toni Hanrahan, owner of Joseph Leigh Designs in Evanston. "There are so many beautiful hybrids — pink roses with burgundy tips, white or yellow roses with variegated tips. Lilies are coming out in different colors, too."

Ms. Hanrahan says she gets a lot of requests for jewel tones — deep reds with plum, royal blues, golds — rather than conventional reds and greens.

Bill Heffernan, president of Heffernan Morgan Inc., uses yellow and green and orange and chartreuse as the latest holiday colors, at least for parties.

"The trend is to be sleeker, more modern, even edgy, and color is what carries the theme," he explains. He stays away from traditional mixed arrangements, favoring masses of one type of flower per vase.

Abundance is the rule for arrangements, which are dense with flowers and include no foliage. Steven Esquivel, head designer for the floral division of Ronsley Special Events, dubs it the "stuffed look."

"Instead of a dozen roses, we do 36, instead of 10 tulips, we have 40," he says. "The designs have become architectural, with square, triangular or rectangular containers rather than the classic bubble balls or ginger jars."

"Tabletop landscaping" — flooding a table with flowers or using them to border blocks of ice — is popular, as are all sorts of natural materials, among them evergreens, mosses, grasses, wheat, rose hips and anything fragrant, especially herbs.

"Food is fair game for decorating, and we do a lot with kiwis, pomegranates, pears, all the green fruits," says Casey Cooper, president of Botanicals Inc. in Chicago.

Some designers contribute artichokes, freeze-dried citrus slices and nuts to the list of foodstuffs being combined with flowers. Others use beaded fruits — apples, pears, and grapes covered with tiny colored beads.

"They catch the light wonderfully," says Robb Land, owner of Chicago-based Fields of Flowers Inc., who sometimes brings together beaded red apples, seasonal greens and terra-cotta roses.

Importing plants from the Southern hemisphere means that spring flowers like tulips and lilacs are available in winter, says Kathy Herdrich, owner of Crest of Fine Flowers in Wilmette. She likes to mate white lilies and red tulips for the holidays.

"Hydrangeas are huge all year," she notes, as are amaryllis both as plants and cut flowers, orchid plants because they're long-lasting and unusual garden-grown flowers, such as cosmos and larkspur. ■