WISE BUYS

Wondering what products deserve a spot in your shop? Four top designers demonstrate the goods that deliver.

BY JENNY SCALA

> Convention-goers buckled in for a wild ride as a quartet from Professional Floral Communicators – International (PFCI) drove them through a whirlwind tour of the latest tools and trappings in the floral trade during the Premier Product Showcase at SAF Palm Springs 2011 in September. They saw 44 products and picked up practical uses to boost their business from Heather de Kok, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Grower Direct Fresh Cut Flowers Inc., in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Coby Neal, AIFD, PFCI, of The Flower Studio in Austin, Texas; Jerome Raska, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, CAFA, CF, of Blumz by...JRDesigns in Ferndale, Mich., and Susan Wilke, AAF, PFCI, of Karthauser & Sons Wholesale Florist in Franklin, Wis. Here is a sampling.

MALLEABLE METAL
Add sparkle and shimmer to arrangements with Diamond Wire. It has the same malleability as the 12-gauge Aluminum Wire to make shapes, structures and armatures, but is enhanced with sparkles. “If they don’t have a color you want, too bad,” Raska teased the audience. “They have 13 to choose from — use one of them.” Diamond Wire comes 32.8 feet per roll, 10 rolls per case. > (800) 321-8286 OasisFloral.com.

TULLE TIME
There was a lot of tulle at the 2011 Atlanta Gift Show, Wilke said, and it’s no wonder, given its versatility. In Palm Springs, Wilke adorned a wedding cake display, plant pot cover and bouquet stand with glittery Sparkle Tulle. At 6-feet by 25-yards per roll, Sparkle Tulle comes in 21 colors. Use it sparingly for subtle sparkle or generously for maximum impact in arrangements for weddings, holidays, proms, homecomings, quinceañeras and birthdays. > (800) 237-9425 LionRibbon.com.
WINTER BLAST
“If you’re a floral designer, you have a knife in one hand and a can of Design Master in the other,” said Neal, who should have added a fur-trimmed red hat and a beard to the list. Neal, decked out in a Santa suit, created a “Jack Frost” signature on a clear glass cylinder vase by spraying it with **Crystal Frost**. It also adds a wintry look to coolers, windows and winter holiday designs. Think frosty hurricane globes and votive cups, or frosty-bottomed vases filled with tulips or spring blossoms. For party work, add submersible lights. You can even re-sell it to consumers for decorating of their windows and mirrors at home. Assure them a little soapy water and a non-abrasive scouring sponge will remove it. > (800) 247-9725 ChrysalUSA.com.

REGAL COVERING
“I’m a glitter girl,” de Kok said, giving her stamp of approval for **Diamond Wrap**. It comes in five colors and looks like rhinestones but is made of a plastic material. “It’s easy to cut strips to any size so you can customize the width for a beautiful bridal bouquet wrap,” de Kok said, showing proof: She covered the square base of a pavé style arrangement of hot pink roses with a swath of the hot pink Diamond Wrap. > (800) 385-5114 AccentDecor.com.

SPARKLING WATER
“You know how dirty gerb stems are,” de Kok said, “and stock with the icky ick, turning the water brown?” Keep your stems in crystal clear water with the new and improved **Chrysal Gerb Pro**. This pill is slightly smaller and harder than its predecessor, making it less likely to crumble. Otherwise, same great results, same amount of active chlorine released, same control time of two to three days, same method of use — one pill for 1/2-gallon water when treating gerberas, and one pill per gallon for everything else. > (800) 247-9725 ChrysalUSA.com.

PERFECT TIMING
“Who wants to increase sales?” Wilke rhetorically asked the Premier Product Showcase audience. **My Special Dates** is a free service reminding your customers of upcoming birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions. Your customers enter their contact information, special dates and how they want to be contacted. Then they’ll automatically be reminded to contact your shop to make a special purchase. > (800) 792-4445 MySpecialDates.com.
LADIES NIGHT Customers will go wild for flowers treated with Chrysal Plant & Orchid Food Drops, said shoe fiend Heather de Kok (right), who added that using it “will give me more shoe money.” Susan Wilke (left) shows how Lion Ribbon’s Diamond Delights gives vases a sparkly, trendy touch.

POPULAR PLANT COVERS
Dress up plants, arrangements and gifts in water-resistant Envi Cachepots. Made in the USA, Envi Cachepots come in small and medium sizes, fitting most 4- and 6-inch potted plants. An added bonus: they come with gift tags. Wilke likes double-stacking them, with the bottom pot upside down and the top pot right side up, to form a pedestal in plant displays. Add a liner for fresh products. > (800) 748-0517 JHC.com.

GORGEOUS GUTHRIE
The two-toned Guthrie Vase will surely be a keepsake for many, Neal said, as it is both decorative and functional. Blues and greens blend with browns and blacks in this scallop-edged, drip-glazed container that can work in the home or office. Neal showed the vessel to the convention audience with a vertical green arrangement of artichokes, grasses and foliage. > MyBloomNet.net.

LOVING SENTIMENTS
If a customer wants to express loving sentiments to mothers, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, best friends or significant others, sell them the Beauty and Grace Bouquet by Vera Wang. This elegant handcrafted, ribbed glass keepsake vase is perfect for any time of year, Neal said, and for any combination of flowers. Neal filled his vase with pale pink lilies, yellow callas and artful loops of bear grass. > (800) 767-4000 FTDi.com.
NATURALLY CHIC

The look of the Weathered Slate and Weathered Brown cement containers in the Urban Earth Collection brings the outside in when creating urban chic designs for commercial settings or home décor. The collection includes a square vase, planter, round pot, tapered planter and tapered square vase. Each piece is sealed on the inside, and has protective furniture pads on the bottom. “Looks heavy, but it is lightweight, which saves you on the shipping costs,” Raska said.

SYNDICATE SALES

(800) 428-0515

SyndicateSales.com.

SHINING STAR

The Mirrored Silver Cube is the ultimate container for country music fans. Featured in Teleflora’s “The Collection by Faith Hill,” this contemporary cube’s mirrored silver finish raises its perceived value. Fill it with a mix of whites, yellows and peaches, or go pink for equally sweet sentiments. Raska showed it in Palm Springs in two designs: a topiary of yellow lilies with loops of purple wire accenting the stems, and an orange combination of protea and gerbera nestled inside foliage with purple wire accents. The cube also makes a gorgeous candleholder. > (800) 333-0205

MyTeleflora.com.

FAST STAND

De Kok raved about the ease of setting up the Fold ‘n Go Wire Easel. “I can get my 10-year-old son to assemble these for me,” she said. “They’re so easy.” Choose from 48-, 54-, or 60-inch powder-coated steel easels to display floral wreaths and sprays. The crossbar support, which is nine inches from the top, provides stability and support for arrangements to ensure “no more fall-throughs,” de Kok added. > (800) 253-0409


COSTUME PARTY

Jerome Raska (right) uses his head donning Midollino Sticks from Smithers-Oasis, while Coby Neal (left) takes a turn as St. Nick, showing the Vera Wang hang tag accompanying the FTD Holiday Wishes Bouquet designer bowl.

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WHOSALELERS: TRY THIS

Hosting a product showcase can strengthen your relationships with customers and establish your business as the go-to place for new products, trends and solutions. Get started at www.safnow.org/successful-events with “PFCI’s Successful Events: A 12-Step Guide to Organizing Programs that Educate, Motivate and Captivate” and search for a PFCI speaker to lead the event.

HAUTE BOUQUETS

De Kok, a self-described shoe addict, admits to owning hundreds of pairs. She points to the increased bridal sales she’s getting from showing customers the arrangements in “Rene’s Bouquets for Brides” as her ticket to adding to her collection. “It is an absolute selling tool,” she said, pointing to the large 156-page full-color coffee table resource guide book. The large format photos, detailed close-up images and selected how-to visuals make it an ideal resource in bridal consultation areas and floral design rooms. Convention attendees had the opportunity to purchase the book and have it signed on the spot by its author, René Van Rems, AIFD.

> (760) 734-4500 ReneVanRems.com.

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POP CULTURE

“The Language of Flowers” novel reached the 13th spot on the New York Times Best Sellers list in September, making it “the chitchat of convention,” Wilke said. Released in late August, the novel shows how one florist’s work with flowers changes people’s lives. “I was totally enthralled and couldn’t put it down,” said Wilke, who purchased the audio version — so she didn’t have to put it down when driving.

The Wall Street Journal dubbed it “lucid and lovely” and O, The Oprah Magazine, called it “fascinating.” The novel is sure to gain steam as Fox 2000 Pictures acquired the film rights to Vanessa Diffenbaugh’s novel. Wilke urged attendees to capitalize on the exposure the novel brings to flowers and florists, and talk about flower meanings with customers. She said florists can sell the book to women’s groups and as an add-on to Mother’s Day gifts. Random House offers SAF members the discounted rate of $12.50 each (including free shipping) when ordering 20 or more copies. > Call Random House to order, (800) 733-3000; be sure to mention you are an SAF member. safnow.org/kit2011.
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