LASTING LOVELIES

> Their fragrant, ruffled petals give garden roses an undeniably romantic quality that has long placed them on the wish lists of countless brides. And requests for garden roses have risen in recent years — not only for weddings, but also for daily orders, said Michael Derouin, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of McArdle’s Florist & Gifts in Greenwich, Conn.

At Starbright Floral Design in New York City, Creative Director Tom Sebenius has noticed an uptick, as well. “In the past, garden roses were better left for event work, as they weren’t expected to last more than a few hours or so,” he said. “Now, garden roses are lasting much longer than before,” making them viable choices for everyday work. “Customers’ tastes have also become more sophisticated, so the demand is higher,” he added. It’s a trend not limited to the East Coast: For two years, Bridget Carlson, of Ashland Addison Florist in Chicago, has had a standing order with her wholesaler for a weekly shipment of garden roses to satisfy customers celebrating all occasions.

Here are nine varieties with a vase life (10 to 15 days) as enchanting as their textures, colors and fragrances.

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“Every time I see this, I think ‘romance.’ They are just so pretty,” said Sylvia Bird, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of ‘Bridal Piano’ (Alexandra Farms). This variety, whose name suggests a matrimonial role, “would be perfect in wedding designs,” she said. The Fort Myers, Fla., designer envisions a monoflora hand-tied bouquet, “edged with soft-looking foliage, like variegated pittosporum.” White, ivory and pastel-colored flowers would all make apt accompaniments, said Jeff Corbin, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. “A bouquet of these with clusters of stephanotis and a collar of dusty miller would be sweet for a hot summer day’s wedding.”

“As the title suggests, ‘Blanc de Blancs’ (Green Valley Floral) is the perfect rose for the all-white bridal bouquet,” said Walter Fedyshyn, AIFD, PFCI. “No foliage — just a soft, fluffy nosegay full of these snowy beauties.” To add interest to the large open roses, include freesia, ranunculus or dendrobium orchid florets, he said. Silver candelabras with the roses spilling out carries the all-white theme into the reception, said the creative design manager at Phillip’s Flowers in Chicago: “Sprinkle the soft white petals down the table and the aisle during the ceremony, for a romantic touch.”

“A simple cluster or hand-tied bouquet of ‘Wanted’ (Alexandra Farms) would really show off the rose’s outstanding color,” especially if carried by bridesmaids in black cocktail dresses, Fedyshyn said. “Add some sparkle with tiny rhinestone accents.” For matching centerpieces, arrange the roses in black glass cubes, he said. Inserting rhinestone pins to the centers of the roses will give the look extra style; placing votive candles around the centerpieces will make the table really shine, he said.
“Looks delicious,” said Sharon McGukin, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of ‘Kate’ (David Austin Roses), a raspberry beauty named after the Duchess of Cambridge, freshly available in the U.S.

“This intense color would be great juxtaposed against crisp greens,” said McGukin, author of “Flowers of the Heart: A Bride’s Guide to Choosing Flowers for Her Wedding.” Given the rose’s intricate beauty, go with simple styling, she said: “Think of a textural design in a low glass bowl lined with concentric circles of layered Aspidistra leaves, with one luscious, fragrant rose tucked in.” For a hand-tied bouquet, she suggests a collar of fresh mint.

“A perfect choice for romantic garden weddings with old world charm,” Fedyslyn said of ‘Voyage’ (Alexandra Farms). For ethereal bouquets for the bridal party, he recommends blending the roses with smaller white blooms and accenting with pink or white bouvardia or stephanotis. “Moss lined French wire baskets filled with these old-fashioned garden roses, finished with Queen Anne’s Lace and trails of ivy would be lovely centerpieces to complement the girls’ bouquets,” he said. Jenny Behlings, AAF, PFCI, called ‘Voyage’ “the truest baby pink — a great rose for a new Mommy and Daddy of a baby girl.” A simple rose bowl filled with this variety “would be the most wonderful surprise to receive, especially if you were stuck home sick in bed,” said the owner of Jenny’s Floral in Custer, S.D. “The high petal count and fragrance brings back childhood memories of ‘old fashioned’ rose bushes.”

“‘Green Eye’ (Green Valley Floral) against green bridesmaid’s dresses to really enhance the unusual center,” Fedyslyn said. For table arrangements, accentuate “the eye” with bright green button chrysanthemums, green chinaberries and green dendrobium orchid sprays. “Add fresh green grapes or Granny Smith apples to really make a ‘green’ statement,” he said.

For brides in gowns with subtle pink undertones, ‘Pink O’Hara’ (Alexandra Farms) would give their bouquet a complementary blush, especially when mixed with cream roses, Thomas said. For a “modern twist,” pair the ultra-feminine garden rose with gray succulents and any flowers in “Tangerine Tango,” an orange shade that Pantone dubbed color of the year. “The rose and succulent combination would ‘cool down’ the orange,” she said. “That’s important around here, where temperatures often reach the 90s to 100s for summer weddings.”