HORT COUTURE: SUCCULENTS ARE IN

> It’s not a mirage. Succulents are showing up everywhere: from hotel lobbies to backyards, from weddings to Sex and the City 2. “Demand for succulents is on the rise,” said Sam Eum, owner of Kimura Wholesale in Los Angeles, where he sells more than 100 flats of succulents a week. “I expect they will be used in funerals pretty soon.”

With their waxy texture and rosette form, succulents add interest to a floral design, particularly in fresh wreaths paired with sphagnum moss or in attendants’ bouquets, said Wilton Hardy, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. “Also, they offer a relief from the many blue-green foliage materials used today,” he said. Walter Fedyszyn, AIFD, PFCI, loves arranging succulents on a bed of river rock or glass gems displayed in a low ceramic or glass bowl. The Creative Design manager at Philip’s Flowers in Chicago adds cymbidium orchid florets “for an exotic flavor.”

Though typically associated with the desert, succulents thrive — and are requested — in all types of climates and markets.

In humid South Carolina, Lisa Thomas stocks her shop, Out of Hand, with more than 60 different varieties of succulents. “I just love their juxtaposition with feminine flowers,” the Mount Pleasant-based florist said. She reaches for petite cultivars to make boutonnieres, “as guys want to hit the deck when I come at them with a gerb,” she said.

In Cable, Wis., Sue Wald, co-owner of Big Brook Greenhouse and Simply Succulents, receives abundant calls for her Sempervivums, (commonly known as “hen and chicks”), a genus of succulents bred to withstand cold temperatures. “We even use them outdoors as Christmas decorations,” Wald said.

Succulents’ water-retaining attributes make them super-low maintanence in both landscape and fresh-cut designs, Wald said. (See Care and Handling, p. 48, for more information.) But if you use succulents as fresh cuts, “starve them for water and make sure they have plenty of direct sunlight” before clipping, said James Lowe, AIFD, of Lowe’s Floral in Minot, N.D., where he sells 165 succulent cultivars. “A slightly desiccated succulent will be less prone to shattering.”

CIRCLE OF LIFE “Living wreaths, succulent walls and orbs are a huge trend right now,” James Lowe, AIFD, said. “The tight mix of textures and low-water requirements make succulents perfect for decorating any outdoor space.” He arranged this wreath with Crassula argentina, Graptoveria (‘Moon Glow’), Crassula rupestris and Crassula adolphi ‘Golden Glow’.

SUPER BOWLS Succulent bowls filled with various Echeverias, Crassulas and Sedums make excellent centerpieces, patio decorations and housewarming gifts, said Stephanie Whitehouse, sales and marketing manager at Peace Tree Farm in Kintnersville, Pa. “It’s the perfect gift for a new gardener,” she said. “They’re easy to maintain and the design aesthetics are already done.”
FALL FOR SUCCULENTS “This is a study in textures,” Lowe said of his new composition, “Autumnscape.” It features tinted, bright orange-edged *Sedum adolphi* ‘Golden Glow’, paired with non-succulents, including (clockwise) millet, chrysanthemum, flax, safflower, hypericum berries, *Gravelia* and sushi-rolled *Aspidistra*.

SOMETHING NEW Michael Derouin, AAF, AIFD, PFCl, contrasts the softness of ‘Vendella’ roses and white freesia with succulents and anthurium in this bridal bouquet. He finishes it off in a flocked branch collar with a white sisal handle. “Succulents seem to be everywhere,” said the designer from McArdle’s Florist & Garden Center in Greenwich, Conn. “I hope this is a trend that sticks around.”

FOREVER FESTIVE Simply Succulents’s Christmas wreaths appeared on Martha Stewart’s television show in 2006. “These wreaths will last for many years if given proper care,” Wald said. “In fact, the name *Sempervivum* means ‘live forever,’ which makes it a cute item to use in a wedding.”

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