An abundant number of frilly, fragrant blooms in fashionable hues charmed judges, earning Eufloria’s ‘Blushing Parasol’ top honors in the 2014 SAF Outstanding Varieties Competition.

BY KATIE HENDRICK

PHOTOS BY BETSY HANSEN
The magazine of the Society of American Florists (SAF)

On a 2012 trip to rose breeding facilities in Holland and Germany, Chad Nelson spied “a definite winner” when he laid eyes upon ‘Blushing Parasol’, a multi-tonal spray rose.

“Right away, I knew we had to have this at our farm,” said the sales manager at Eufloria Flowers, a seventh-generation hydroponic rose producer in Nipomo, Calif. “It had every trait our customers love.” A few of the appealing attributes he saw: fragrance, a garden-like petal structure, and nuanced coloring with hints of pink, peach, yellow and cream that make the spray rose a match for a wide range of color schemes.

Nelson’s assessment proved accurate. Since he began selling ‘Blushing Parasol’ in 2013, he’s fielded constant requests from satisfied customers for more bunches. “Fortunately, it’s available year-round!” he said.

Since its debut in the 2014 SAF Outstanding Varieties Competition, Aug. 13, in Marco Island, Fla., ‘Blushing Parasol’ has found scores of new admirers. Among them: the nine judges — made up of an appointed panel of growers, wholesalers and retailers — who awarded the demure and dainty spray rose the coveted title “Best in Show.”

“I posted this on Instagram two hours ago and already have more than 60 likes,” said judge Joost Bongaerts of Florabundance Inc. in Carpinteria, Calif. “Anything with rosebuds is universally popular,” he said. “But this a variety that will make customers take notice and learn its name.”

“It’s simply ... phenomenal,” said Eleanor Clevenger, of David Austin Roses in Miami. With its eight to 10 blooms per stem, ‘Blushing Parasol’ is a versatile and valuable option for florists, she said. It’s also a flower that speaks to several current styles, including the “sorbet” trend (a preference for all things peach, pink or berry-colored), the “ombré” trend (color that is gradated in tone; see p. 20, p. 50) and the “hand-picked” look (garden-like qualities, such as fragrance and ruffled petals).

Marketability and usefulness topped judge Celine Bray’s reasons for awarding ‘Blushing Parasol’ “Best in Show.” “This fits in the color palettes of about 90 percent of brides,” said the sales representative for Jet Fresh Flowers in Miami, Fla. “And all the laterals make it very user friendly for florists, whether it’s for event or everyday work.”

“I have to get this in my shop!” said judge Kiersten Schulte, of Eastern Floral in Grand Haven, Mich. “Our customers will go wild for its romantic look and sweet fragrance. I’d use it every day.”

Judge Jessica Cosentino, AAF, plans to have a standing order of ‘Blushing Parasol’ at Cosentino’s Florist in Auburn, N.Y. “I know if I buy it once, customers will want it again and again,” she said. It’ll make a lovely choice for Valentine’s Day arrangements, corsages and floral hairpieces, she said.

Judge Josh Glass, AAF, of Peoples Flower Shops in Albuquerque, N.M., rattled off a list of exemplary attributes — strong stems, long laterals, gorgeous foliage, sought-after colors, consistently open blooms — that made ‘Blushing Parasol’ “very deserving of Best in Show,” he said.

“A timeless beauty,” said judge Brent Denham of Arizona Family Florist in Phoenix. “It has an elegant, garden look that is always in demand.”

The SAF 2014 Outstanding Varieties Competition drew 254 entries from 34 companies. Judges scored each entry based on color and commercial appeal, stem and foliage, bloom form and size, and overall presentation. Judges evaluated specific categories of flowers; the highest scored entry of each won “Best in Class.” The judges collectively assessed these winners, naming ‘Blushing Parasol’ the best of the best.

Read on for the competition’s other top performers.
Hailing from The Lone Star State, Denham admitted a penchant for anything that reminds him of “the yellow rose of Texas.” Shiny foliage and strong stems put this saffron stunner in the spotlight, he said.

Cosentino will recommend ‘Bikini’ for customers celebrating a golden anniversary or a friendship. “I know the natural inclination would be to pair it with orange and red, but I think it would really pop next to lime and purple,” she said.

For customers who don’t want “the same old rose,” this is it, said judge Peter Van Antwerpen, of Virgin Farms in Miami. “This would be great variety to raise a design’s perceived value,” he said, praising ‘Houdini’ for its rich salmon color, uniformity, foliage (“as clean as it can get!”) and distinguishing green center.

Denham anticipated ‘Houdini’ making an appearance in many Arizona nuptials. “It has amazing color intensity and texture that ties in with everything brides are pinning on Pinterest right now,” he said. For the legions of women craving ranunculus or peonies, “this is a great alternative,” he said.
“This just makes you smile,” Schulte said. She praised the giant bloom size, which is consistent for every flower in the bunch. “That’s a huge advantage when we do event work and have to make lots of replicas,” she explained. The rubber duck-colored hue also fits perfectly in the neon palette her customers “are loving right now.”

The chrysanthemum’s unusual shape captivated Bongaerts. “It’s a mix between a spider and a football mum, and actually looks a little like a cactus dahlia,” he said. Mike Henriques, of HyCallas in Miami, Fla., “Florists will like how much space it fills and customers will like its texture.”

Henriques described ‘Anastasia Sunny’ as “exceptionally healthy-looking variety,” thanks to its brilliant color and clean foliage.

“I would use this every single day,” Schulte said. The lily’s variegated coloring —white, pale pink, dark pink — “is spectacular,” and its massive bloom size means florists will get “a real bang for their buck,” she said. Bongaerts awarded ‘Amarossi’ high marks for having upward facing blooms. “As a wholesaler, I know this will mean customer satisfaction because the lilies won’t get damaged when we package them in a sleeve.” A consistent flower count, great vase life seven to 10 blooms per stem and delicate fragrance add to the variety’s appeal, he said.

“The big heads really captured my attention,” Henriques said.

The judges had good company in their applause: ‘Amarossi’ won the most votes from convention attendees, earning it “The People’s Choice” honors.
“This flower looked so perfect, I almost wondered if it was made out of paper,” Henriques said. “Every petal is so nicely defined.”

Bongaerts saw good commercial value in this blush pink, accentuated with its dark center.

Strong, straight stems make ‘Alliance’ a very user-friendly gerbera, Schulte said. And the coloring, “reminiscent of strawberry lemonade,” impressed her.

“This should be a staple in my shop,” she said, anticipating ‘Alliance’ in many monofloral arrangements or mixed with white hydrangeas.

> When Schulte saw ‘Pumori’, one word came to mind: prom. “We use a ton of alstroemeria in corsages and body flowers,” she said. “The variegated qualities work with the ombré dresses so well.” With ‘Pumori’s’ “enormous” blooms, she said, florists would only need one bloom to make a statement for teenage fashionistas.

Well-defined colors and foliage “without a hint of yellow” make this alstroemeria stand above the rest, Henriques said.
“This is an exciting new look for designers,” Clevenger said. She gushed about ‘Star Cherry’s’ delicate flowers and “exceptionally verdant foliage.”

“Carnations — unfairly — get a bad rep, but no customer would identify this as one,” Bray said. “Put this is an arrangement and people will just think it is pretty and very long lasting.”

Vibrant bursts of color would make ‘Star Cherry’ a good choice for minimal style arrangements, Glass said.

“I adore this,” Clevenger said. “We’re used to longer banksia that look like a loofah, but this size will make it more user friendly for designers.”

Intense colors and texture made this a winner for Bray. “I know several relatives and friends who’d be blown away if I sent them this.”

Customers who want something out of the ordinary will gravitate to ‘Scarlet’ Banksia, Glass said. “It demands attention.”
“This has an impressive amount of flowers per stem,” Bray said. “Florists will get their money’s worth with this variety in short arrangements.” Its color — not quite yellow, not quite green — make ‘Cream Delight’ a versatile choice to have on hand, she said. “I love how the contrast between the light flowers and the reddish brown stem. It really draws you in.”

‘Potted Party’ would be a customer favorite at Peoples Flower Shops, Glass said. “We do a lot of potted plant sales and this shade, which is almost neon, is very on trend.”

Bray and Clevenger also spoke of the marketability of the color. “Color and foliage are critical with potted roses,” Clevenger said. Sequential blooming, too, really influences customer satisfaction, she said. “This one already has buds blooming with others ready to go.”
Of the 36 companies exhibiting at the SAF 2014 Outstanding Varieties Competition some left with enough ribbons to rival the wrap department at the North Pole. Those with the biggest haul include:

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In addition, the following companies earned either blue or red ribbons:

- Alexandra Farms, alexandrafarms.com
- Cal Glads, CalGlads.com
- Choice Farms, ChoiceFarms.com
- Danziger “Dan” Flower Farm, Danziger.co.il
- Equiflor (Rho Roses), RioRoses.com
- Fides, Fides.nl
- Fresca Farms, FrescaFarms.com
- Green Point Nurseries Inc., GreenPointNursery.com
- International Rose Breeders LLC, EGhillCompany.com
- Kent’s Bromeliad Nursery Inc., KentsBromeliad.com
- Kitayama Bros. Inc., KBflowers.com
- Mellano & Company, Mellano.com
- Oregon Flowers Inc., OregonFlowers.com
- Poulsen Roser A/S, PoulsenRoser.com
- Quality Service S.A. “Qualisa”, Qualisa.com
- Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers, ResendizBrothers.com
- The Elite Flower, EliteFlower.com
“Caesar’s Palace’ LA Hybrid Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC
“I’m a little biased because this is my favorite color,” Henriques said. “But it’s a color a lot of customers like too and is available and usable year-round.” Like the casino of the same name, ‘Caesar’s Palace’ would light up any space, he said.
Schulte agreed. “Orange flowers, especially lilies, are in high demand at our shop,” she said. “This one, which looks like sherbet, would fit in equally well in the fall (with rust colors) or spring (with pastels).”

‘Papilio’ Oriental Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC
“This reminds me of a sunrise peeking out of a cloud,” Schulte said of ‘Papilio’s’ pink, yellow and white coloring. Given its breathtaking bloom size, “I’d be inclined to use this flower all alone,” she said. “If I did pair it with anything, it would need to be something tall, so it wouldn’t detract from the lily’s fullness.”
Bongaerts described the color as “distinguished.” He also liked its subtle fragrance. “This is a good choice for allergy sufferers,” he said.

‘Rilato’ Oriental Lily
Green Valley Floral
“People are always asking for white Oriental lilies and this is one of the best I’ve ever seen,” Bongaerts said. Its upward facing blooms “make transportation easy and give florists a good presentation.” Ruffled petals “add dimension to an already giant bloom,” Schulte said. Florists could fill a vase using only two stems, she said, “and the foliage is so nice, you don’t need any extra greens.” She recommends it in an elegant arrangement of roses and light blue hydrangeas.

‘Spark’ Gerbera
Kitayama Bros. Inc.
“This color, rust, is unusual, and would be in high demand in autumn,” Bongaerts said. “It would pair beautifully with an orange lily.” “I love how it goes from sunny yellow to orange to copper,” Schulte said. She anticipates it would be a popular pick for corsages at homecoming dances or Thanksgiving centerpieces.
Henriques gave ‘Spark’ high marks for its strong, sturdy, straight stems and defined petals.

‘Table Dance’ Oriental Lily
Kitayama Bros Inc.
Henriques and Bongaerts both awarded “Table Dance” high points for marketability. Schulte envisioned this “very feminine” lily in wedding and sympathy work. “I love how all the blooms face forward,” she said. “This makes it easy to use in designs and it photographs well, which is key to getting online orders.”

‘Green Ball’ Dianthus
Ball
“This carnation is totally in line with the neon colors trending today,” Glass said of ‘Green Ball’s’ marketability. When Bray brings flowers home to her friends, she tries to include ‘Green Ball’. “They go crazy for it,” she said. “It’s economical, long lasting and pleasing to the eye.”

‘Forza Red’ LA Hybrd Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC
“You hardly ever see a lily this deep red,” Bongaerts said. “This will be a hit for Christmas or Valentine’s Day.” “It looks just like wine — in other words: rich,” Henriques said.
Schulte can see many Yuletide brides carrying ‘Forza Red’ down the aisle, paired with white roses.

‘Dutch Design’ Gerbera
Kitayama Bros. Inc.
“It’s a very saturated color — almost like fire — that is useable year-round,” Henriques said.
Schulte would pair it with leucadendron in the summer, celosia in the fall, and lime green and pink flowers in the spring “in bright containers.”
"‘Freedom’ standard rose
Fresca Farms
"No matter what we try to tell them, guys just want to buy red roses for Valentine’s Day. If you offer this, they will spend buy it and spend a lot of money,” Denham said of ‘Freedom’s’ 120-cm long stems.

"Cosentino, too, described ‘Freedom’ as the perfect choice for the man who wants to make a statement. "I could totally see this go out on a blind date,” she said.

‘Juliet’ (Ausjameson)
Garden Rose
Green Valley Floral

Cosentino gave ‘Juliet’ a high score for its blooms’ uniform size and identical spiral pattern. "They look like little teacups," she said.

Denham declared the creamy peach “extremely versatile and marketable.”
Van Antwerpen praised its hearty stems and glossy foliage.

‘Mayra’s Rose’ Garden Rose
Choice Farms

"Frilly, feminine and perfect for a wedding,” Van Antwerpen said of ‘Mayra’s Rose’s’ consumer appeal.
Denham called the petal count “remarkable.”

“It’s a really sophisticated pink,” Cosentino said. “You could pair this with lime green without fear of looking like a Maybelline commercial.”

‘Nashville’ LA Hybrid Lily
Oregon Flowers Inc.

“It looks like the sun,” Henriques said, praising ‘Nashville’s’ bright “flawless” color. An impressive five blooms per stem and “outstanding” foliage wowed Bongaerts.
Schulte recommends pairing ‘Nashville’ with pinks “for a lemonade palette that would liven up a space and make people happy.”

‘Merluza’ LA Hybrid Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC

“This looks very clean,” Bongaerts said of ‘Merluza’. A touch of light green when it opens adds visual interest and upward facing blooms makes transport, design work and photography easier.

“There’s absolutely no bruising,” Henriques noted. “The foliage looks very healthy too.”

‘Moody Blues’ Standard Rose
Royal Flowers

“A great season-less rose,” Cosentino said. For wedding work, she’d like to pair it with black callas in the fall and peonies in the spring. This would be a great variety to have on hand for sympathy work, she said: “What grandmother didn’t love lavender?”

‘Midori’ Anthurium
Green Point Nurseries Inc.

Clevenger could not find a single blemish on this entry. “It’s so flawless, I had to touch it to prove myself it wasn’t fake,” she said.

“The perfect apple green has the vibrancy to stand alone for event work, Glass said.
Bray said ‘Midori’ was aptly named. “It definitely reminds me of the drink,” she said.

‘Mayra’s Rose’ Garden Rose
Choice Farms

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“Frilly, feminine and perfect for a wedding.”

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“A touch of light green when it opens adds visual interest and upward facing blooms makes transport, design work and photography easier.

“Henriques noted. “The foliage looks very healthy too.”

‘Moody Blues’ Standard Rose
Royal Flowers

“Cosentino said of ‘Moody Blues’:

“Frilly, feminine and perfect for a wedding.”

“Van Antwerpen said of ‘Moody Blues’:

“The petal count "remarkable.”

“Clevenger praised ‘Sweet Black’s’ compactness. "Look at all those blossoms!" she said.

‘Midori’ Anthurium
Green Point Nurseries Inc.

Clevenger could not find a single blemish on this entry. “It’s so flawless, I had to touch it to prove myself it wasn’t fake,” she said.

“The perfect apple green has the vibrancy to stand alone for event work, Glass said.
Bray said ‘Midori’ was aptly named. “It definitely reminds me of the drink,” she said.
‘Free Spirit’ Standard Rose
Royal Flowers

“We get a lot of requests for ‘peachy pink,’ which is subjective and hard to source,” Denham said. “This variety runs the gauntlet of pinks and peaches and will especially appeal to customers in tune with the ombré trend.

“This looks like a ‘BOGO’ (Buy One Get One) rose to me,” Cosentino said. “You pay for a rose and get two extra buds per stem.” She would reach for this variety for a casket spray. “The number of blooms and vibrant color would add a lot of dimension that could be seen from the back of a church,” she said.

Van Antwerpen praised ‘Free Spirit’ for its high petal count, blooms that open fully and consistently, and foliage “so lush greens aren’t necessary.”

### CHOICE COLORS

If you’re noticing a lot of similar shades among these winners, it’s no coincidence. Judges scored entries for marketability, and consumers’ color preferences play a huge factor in that assessment. Based on conversations with our judges, the following are the five most in demand colors to have in your cooler:

- Ombré
- White
- Orange
- Neon
- Radiant Orchid

PANTONE’S 2014 COLOR OF THE YEAR
‘Pink Flamingo’ Calla
Fresca Farms
Florists looking to create an opulent-looking arrangement in mere minutes need only reach for ‘Pink Flamingo’. Its massive flower and stem size are well suited for a wedding, sympathy work or hotel lobby pieces, Bongaerts said. Bray awarded high points for marketability, due to the calla’s antique pink color (“classic,” she said) and reputation as a high-end flower. “Garden roses are susceptible to botrytis, but this is a very clean,” Van Antwerpen said. “The creamy white is always in high demand.”

‘Madiba Red’ King Protea
Wafex USA
“This commands attention,” Clevenger said of ‘Madiba Red’s’ crimson coloring and “striking” shape. Bray, too, commented on its “wow factor.” “There’s good commercial value in a flower that makes people lean in for a closer look,” she said. She envisions it in a hotel lobby or on a Thanksgiving table. Glass gushed about the enormity of this variety. “Its stems are as thick as my fingers!” he said. “This was made for stage designs.”

‘Patience’ Garden Rose
Alexandra Farms
“We don’t score fragrance, but I smelled all the garden roses anyway because I know it’s a perk that adds to consumer appeal, at least for our customers,” Denham said. He also awarded high points for an impressive vase life, high petal count, strong stem and clear foliage. “Garden roses are susceptible to botrytis, but this is a very clean,” Van Antwerpen said. “The creamy white is always in high demand.”

‘Moody Blues’ Standard Rose
Rosaprima International LLC
A color that matched “Radiant Orchid,” Pantone’s 2014 Color of the Year, spelled marketability to Denham — as did the rose’s bloom size (“as big as your fist!”). “The ratio of head size to stem length is perfect,” Cosentino. The gradual tonal shift from lavender to magenta also impressed. “There’s amazing dimension in this rose,” she said. “It’s practically begging to be used in event work.” “This got a 10 out of 10 in every category for me,” Van Antwerpen said.

‘Carey’ (Ausweather) Garden Rose
Green Valley Floral
Undeniably elegant, ‘Carey’ would befit a sweet sixteen arrangement. “It’s the perfect symbol of a girl’s maturation into a sophisticated lady,” Cosentino said. Denham would recommend this variety for a wedding because of its “super sweet” fragrance. “If a bride has this in her bouquet, she’ll always remember that smell,” he said. Then, every year for her anniversary, “we can sell her husband on using the same garden roses to take her back in time.”

‘Julianne’ Spray Rose
Eufloria Flowers
Clevenger described ‘Julianne’s’ color as “champagne with a hint of peach, just like a Bellini!” The impressive bloom count five to eight blooms per stem will earn florists a lot of money, she said: “You only need three stems in a vase for a breathtaking, high-end arrangement.” With its full, healthy foliage and multi blooms, ‘Julianne’ “looks literally like a bush in a garden, which is what almost every customer is asking for these days,” Bray said. Glass agreed. “This fits that natural, earthy style that’s so in vogue,” he said. “And its fragrance would be an extra selling point with our customers.”
SOCIAL MEDIA made SIMPLE

‘Pink Sapphire Gem’ Spray Rose
Eufloria Flowers
Glass called ‘Pink Sapphire Gem’ “a very relevant color.” Customers gravitate to anything pink, he said. “I would use this daily in cash and carry bouquets.”

“When I look at this, I see a mass of pink — and a dozen of potential corsages,” Bray said.
Clevenger praised how the buds open at the same level. “That quality turns this spray rose into a focal flower,” she said.

‘Mondial’ Standard Rose
Rosaprima International LLC
“The stems are like tree trunks,” Van Antwerpen said. Cosentino agreed. “If a bride’s budget only allowed her bridesmaids to carry one flower, it should be this one,” she said.

Denham said ‘Mondial’ will be his go-to white rose. “This opens beautifully; not a single head looks like a bullet,” he said.

Katie Hendrick is a contributing editor of Floral Management.
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