Business of Design

**PROTEAS PACK A PUNCH**

If you’re seeking a flower with great marketability, look no further than the protea. This exotic beauty, which includes about 80 genera, 1,600 species and countless cultivars (see Fresh Choices, p. 16, for seven), “always gets attention,” said Kathi Thomas, AIFD, PFIC, TMF. Besides boasting exceptional longevity (weeks as a fresh flower, months once dried), proteas’ brilliant coloring and nubby texture appeal to consumers’ preference for something a little different.” These two qualities make designs with proteas a “very easy sale,” the Austin, Texas, designer said, noting that few have turned down her offer to make an arrangement that lasts up to 28 days. Fellow Texan Coby Neal, AIFD, PFIC, echoed Thomas’ high opinion of proteas’ value, saying “not a week goes by that we don’t use them in some fashion” at The Flower Studio. His favorite application: as a focal point, letting one to three proteas shine in a simple arrangement. (However, he couldn’t deny his excitement for an upcoming wedding that will include more than 500!) 🌺

**PRETTY IN PINK** Proteas lend effortless beauty and interest to this everyday arrangement featuring poppy pods, a succulent and grapevine armature. This design, ideal for a corporate client or a hospital patient, cost Thomas $18.50 for wholesale product and materials and could retail for $54.50. It’s very labor-friendly, as well, requiring only 12 minutes to arrange — “and that includes cutting and stripping the grapevine and constructing the armature,” she said.

**EXOTIC ELEGANCE** A single Leucospermum (pincushion) protea takes center stage in this arrangement of dendrobium orchids, tulips and hydrangea, accented by curly willow and Ti leaves. This sophisticated, modern look cost Neal less than $25 for wholesale product and materials, and required less than five minutes to assemble. A frequent seller at The Flower Studio, this arrangement’s retail price begins at $64.95. (Note: If you prefer your proteas “big, fat and juicy,” like Neal does, you will need to substitute another genus, such as Protea, Leucadendron or Banksia, or order from the southern hemisphere, as pincushions’ domestic availability starts in February.

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