Fresh Choices  TRENDS-SETTING TIPS FOR BUYING FRESH CUT FLOWERS AND GREENS

A STRAY FROM THE SPRAYS

Some things never change. Prom fashion is not among them. Influenced by dress designers, magazine editors and even Hollywood, teenagers have transitioned from hoop skirts to poufy sleeves to strapless styles to gowns with cutouts through the midsection (See “Pretty in Prints, Feathers, Sequins and More", p. 28). So why stick with the same corsage (spray rose, baby’s breath, “underwear elastic”) that hasn’t been novel since Richard Nixon was in the White House?

“You as the florist have the best resources for introducing new and trendy ways to use and carry flowers,” said Ardith Beveridge, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. When schools announce prom queen candidates, send them “an electrifying creation with a congratulatory note,” said the director of The Institute of Floristry at Koehler & Dramm Wholesale in Minneapolis. “They will show it to everyone and you can be instrumental in being a proactive, progressive leader.” (P.S. If you’re not already on your local high schools’ email lists, a quick call to the school secretary can change that.)

Here are eight alternative flowers to the standard spray rose, with six top designers’ tips for prom work that is cool and contemporary. For some finished prom looks, see safnow.org/moreonline.

A Stray From the Sprays

‘Miss Teen’ dendrobium orchid (Delaware Valley Floral Group) is one of the best flowers for prom work and “appropriately named,” Beveridge said. “Violet shades are all the rage this season, and they coordinate, complement and contrast so well with ‘tangerine tango,’ the Pantone color of the year,” she said. Adjust the shade to the exact intensity your customer desires with Design Master’s “Just for Flowers” spray; attach to Smithers-Oasis wire — “all of their stunning colors will stimulate ‘Miss Teen’s’ undertones,” she said.

“One of the biggest [fashion] trends this year is flesh toned,” said Laurie Lemek, AIFD, PFCI, of Delaware Valley Floral Group. “This would be amazing paired with ‘Strawberries and Cream’ alstroemeria (Esmeralda).” For a funky wristlet, take some Smithers-Oasis Flat Gold Wire, curl the ends, then glue in alstroemeria florets and pearls accents, she said. This style suits a girl “who is confident and likes to be on the cutting edge,” she said. Jenny Behlings, AAF, PFCI, CFD, called ‘Strawberries and Cream’ “the perfect pink” for this year’s dresses. Its “splash of yellow” will help the flower stand out “amongst the bling that so many dresses are sporting,” added the owner of Jenny’s Floral in Custer, S.D.

‘Strawberries and Cream’ alstroemeria’s (Esmeralda) large blooms “give prom work an upscale look and create depth and texture,” said Jackie Lacey, AIFD, PFCI. Using a combination of blooms and buds results in a full look “that doesn’t need much filler or other flowers,” said the owner of ABC Floral Events in Hilton Head, S.C. “Adding some wire or ‘bling bling’ will take your prom work to the next level,” he said.

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Austin, Texas, designer Kathi Thomas, AIFD, PFCI, gravitates to mini callas for prom work. “They’re so elegant,” she said. “You can put a jewel down the center or even diamond dust the anther.”

**'Red Sox' (Fresca Farms)**, a red ribbon winner in SAF’s 2011 Outstanding Varieties Competition, would make a sophisticated accent against decorative wire wrapped around the upper arm. For a matching boutonniere, “make a lazy ‘s’ out of the wire with curlicues at the end, then band the calla onto it with same color wire,” she said.

Beveridge likes **‘Neon Cherry’ dianthus (Esmeralda)** for its “sassy” color. It would pair well with an orchid, small rose or combination of flowers, she said, adding that ‘Neon Cherry’ should accompany an equally playful dress. Lemek agreed, suggesting it for this year’s very popular “mullet” (short in front, long in back) dresses. It would look wonderful deconstructed, applied in single florets and enhanced with clusters of gems, she said. Her choice materials: Fitz Design’s “Hard Rock Licorice” wristlet, accented with fuchsia Swarovski crystals and finished with opal and fuchsia ribbon from Chic Collection. This look may appeal to a cheerleader or dance team member — a girl whose style is “demure, but with some glitz,” she said.

Dendranthema, such as **‘Athos’ (Liberty Blooms)**, work well in necklaces and bracelets for prom, Thomas said. For an “upscale lei,” string this red-ribbon winning entry from SAF’s 2011 Outstanding Varieties Competition with bugle beads, she said. She recommends alternating 10 beads with a flower. “These green petals would really liven up black dresses or tuxedos at prom,” said Walter Fedyshyn, AIFD, PFCI. The creative design manager for Phillip’s Flowers in Chicago recommends curls of decorative wire in lieu of filler or foliage for a modern look. “Rhinestones or crystal pins glued in the center of each blossom adds texture and a unique touch,” he said.

“All girls love gerberas,” Behlings said. **‘Mini red gerbera’ (Esmeralda)**, a “young, fun and happy flower,” will look beautiful nestled in a girl’s updo hairstyle “and will hold up all night long,” she said. Lemek agreed “this flower needs to stand alone.” Attach a single bloom on a strap of the dress and suggest a single-bloom corsage for the opposite wrist “for a beautiful balance,” she said. She suggests using Fitz’s “Black Laser” wristlet, accented with black crystals and black or silver ribbon.

Mini carnations, such as **‘Bath’ (Golden Flowers)**, another red-ribbon winner from SAF’s 2011 Outstanding Varieties Competition, make excellent composite flowers for corsage work, Thomas said. “They look just like girls in ball gowns,” she said. Fedyshyn spoke of ‘Bath’s’ longevity: “Mini carnations hold up perfectly throughout the night without water,” he said. He recommends wiring or taping individual blooms into floral bracelets or necklaces.