

Uncommon Beauty

With bright white petals surrounding a vivid green center, the daisy spray chrysanthemum 'Alma' won the hearts of judges at SAF's 2018 Outstanding Varieties Competition.



BY BRUCE WRIGHT
PHOTOS BY BETSY HANSEN



Ask anyone to draw a flower, and what do you get? A daisy. So, when you encounter the perfect daisy, it feels like more than just a daisy: It becomes the ideal embodiment of the abstract idea of a flower.

Maybe that explains why the judges at the 2018 Society of American Florists' Outstanding Varieties Competition burst with enthusiasm for 'Alma,' a white spray chrysanthemum that won Best in Show. "When you've been a florist forever, a daisy is the most common thing you see and use," said Rakini Chinery, AAF, AzMF, of Allan's Flowers in Prescott, Arizona, who served as a judge. "But when I got to those daisies, my response was, 'Oh my God, they are so beautiful!'"

Chinery checked off the criteria used by the judges, noting how 'Alma' stood out in each one: color, size, bloom formation, commercial appeal, and the variety's crisp, dark green foliage on its sturdy stem.

But 'Alma' also sparkled with features that make it seem fresh and new. In particular, the bright green centers caught the eye of judges and other observers. "I've seen yellow-green before, never true green like this," said Tim Farrell, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Farrell's Florist in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania.



WINNER, WINNER

'Alma,' a spray chrysanthemum from Deliflor Latin America, charmed judges and floral industry members during SAF's Outstanding Varieties Competition.

"How often do you see a white daisy chrysanthemum with so many blooms all open at the same time?" asked Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, PFCI, of Nordlie in Grandville, Michigan, another judge. "You eliminate waste. Look at the great long breaks," referring to the laterals. "That's going to be a satisfying flower all the way along the chain, from the grower to the wholesaler to the retailer to the end consumer. Everybody's going to love it because it hits all the marks."

'Alma' — submitted by breeder Deliflor Latin America — was grown by Galleria Farms in Colombia. Deliflor had intended to grow all its entries for the competition in its own greenhouses, said Juan David Lecuona, the company's commercial director. However, owing to its short cycle — a feature that growers love, and that potentially makes a variety more available and affordable, because it spends less time in the greenhouse — 'Alma' was in full bloom well before other Deliflor entries.

"We needed to send our star," said Lecuona. "We were lucky that Galleria Farms had a greenhouse full of 'Alma' that was maturing at just the right time."

'Alma' is one of many entries that were initially planned for SAF Palm Beach 2017 — SAF's 133rd annual convention, which had to be canceled owing to Hurricane Irma. The pent-up demand meant that competition this year was particularly fierce. Compared to 2016, when 184 entries vied for ribbons, this year's competition saw 246 entries submitted by nearly 30 growers and breeders in Florida, California, Oregon, and Hawaii, as well as Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador and the Netherlands.

The result? All the more inspiration for participants at SAF Palm Springs 2018 who lingered, admiring and taking notes, in the Outstanding Varieties exhibit. Each year, Farrell takes his notes from the exhibit back to his wholesalers. "I take a picture of the flower and the card next to it, and pass that information on. They'll find that variety for me and bring it in, and many times it becomes one of their best sellers." But meanwhile, Farrell has it first in his area: "You get a heads-up at the convention."

Everyone has their favorites — not always the same as the varieties favored by the judges. But for those who missed the exhibit, or who want to revisit it, the competition's Best in Class, People's Choice and Blue Ribbon winners are identified on the following pages; Red Ribbon winners and a list of the cutting edge suppliers who submitted entries can be found at safnow.org/moreonline.

Best

Standard Rose

'MARZIPAN'

Esprit Miami

A large, creamy rose with a hint of blush pink toward the center, 'Marzipan' boasts a vase life of 16 days. "We just started getting this variety on standing order," said Lani Callister of Ensign Wholesale Floral in Salt Lake City, Utah, one of the competition judges. She likes the waviness in the petals; guard petals have pleasing accents of pale green that define the petal edges and provide a color transition to the sepals and foliage.



in Class

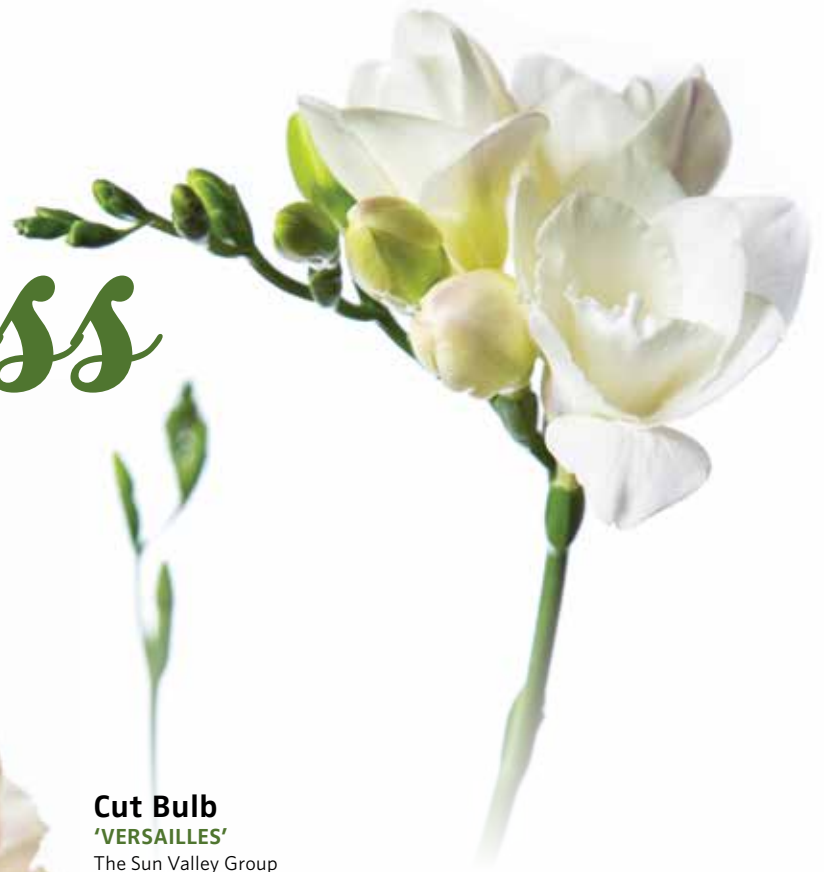


Garden Rose

'MAYRA PINK'

Rosaprima

Not just pink, but a versatile pink, somewhere between medium and blush: "This is a color that everybody wants," Callister observed. In the case of 'Mayra Pink,' that color comes in a distinctive shape, reminiscent of a peony. Longer outer petals yield a rosette with a wide, flat top. "It's beautiful, and I know that it holds up. We went to the farm in Ecuador where this is grown," Callister recalled. "The grower cut a couple stems and handed them to me. When I got back to the hotel eight hours later, they were wilted, but I submerged them in water in the bathtub overnight, and they lasted another five days." Under more normal conditions, projected vase life is 10 days.



Cut Bulb

'VERSAILLES'

The Sun Valley Group

A double white freesia, 'Versailles' fills a niche in the wedding-flower market. Lightly fragrant, with firm, hardy florets of impressive size, it has an impact "like a mini gardenia almost," said Farrell. Double freesia is typically more expensive than single, but not by much, considering its value in design. Historically, it can be harder to source than other flowers — wholesalers may order it from Holland by default. The good news for freesia lovers? 'Versailles' is grown by Sun Valley Floral Farms in California, which projects a vase life of 10 to 18 days.

Spray Rose

'JULIANNE'

Euforia Flowers

Slightly fragrant, 'Julianne' offers the perfect shade of peach (a perennial favorite for wedding work). Not too pink, not too coral, it blends nicely with a range of colors. "This is the new peach rose that retail florists are asking for by name," said Callister. A typical stem combines open blooms with buds, even rather tight buds, for a garden look, with a variety of texture, all of which promises ongoing fresh color in an arrangement that will last for some time. "Just like on a gladiolus stem, most of the time the ones at the very top are going to open last. I like it!"



Gerbera

'KENSİ'

Green Valley Floral

While the many rows of hot-pink petals might be first to catch your eye, they are beautifully set off by 'Kensi's' bright and tidy, yellow-green center. "Look at the petal count!" Waterous enthused, noting that the blooms in the bunch were consistent in size (over 4 inches in diameter). "Usually there's a double row outside, one inside, but here it seems like eight rows from the inside out. The stems are very strong, so this is a gerbera that's going to stand up well. It's beautiful in profile as well — a good value no matter how you use it."



Alstroemeria

'DIVA'

Flores Funza

Sheer beauty is a good starting point, but this 'Diva' promises hardworking, long-lasting strength as well, with a projected vase life of 15 days. "You can feel how firmly the petals are connected at the calyx, even on a bloom that is open wide," Waterous observed. "The blossom count is enormous, and they are not all clumped together, so you can get good coverage. With the long breaks, you can use those lateral stems individually in small arrangements. And the foliage looks green and bright."

Potted Flowering Plant

'KORI PARADE'

Poulsen Roser A/S

The high petal count and the bloom size, large for a 4-inch potted rose, only emphasize the charm of the miniature in 'Kori Parade,' with its abundant, diminutive, serrated leaves of a bright, even green. Packed with about 90 petals each, the wide-open rosettes offer instant gratification while alternating with buds that promise more to come. The color, a deep pink-purple, distinguishes this potted rose from standard red or pink. Customers can expect to enjoy blooms for up to three weeks.





Other Cut Flower

'CANDY PINK'

Arvi Farms/Groflowers

With a splash of light pink over creamy white, 'Candy Pink' fits a popular color profile, but the hydrangea also impressed with its size, strength and consistency. "It was very well shaped," said Adam Van Winkle of Cascade Floral Wholesale in Everett, Washington, a competition judge. "It didn't have darker hues or antiquing to it. It would be wedding perfect for an event. And then the foliage, how straight the stem is. It shipped well: It came in clean, with no mechanical damage, and that was probably a reason that it won best in class." Vase life is projected at 15 days.



Decorative Foliage

COTINUS (SMOKEBUSH)

The Sun Valley Group

In a color that varies from deep reddish green to dark purple and burgundy, cotinus provides the perfect foliage accent to the popular blush pinks. "We use this whenever it's in season," said Chinery. (The cotinus season starts in mid-May, around Mother's Day, according to Sun Valley.) Chopped to the ground in February or March, the plants can eventually grow to 9 feet tall, but usually stems are harvested when they are only 20 or 30 inches tall. The first crop is softer, shipped in water. Later, stems and foliage are firm: A single leaf holds up nicely in a corsage or boutonniere. By September, edges of the leaves may show attractive red markings.

Dianthus

'PEARL'

Flores Funza

'Pearl' received high marks for its peachy hue, stronger in the center where the petals are also denser, giving the blossom a garden-style look. The flower heads looked as though they had opened wide naturally, without any of the massaging that designers sometimes resort to, noted Van Winkle. "You can feel the weight of it," he observed, hefting a stem in his hand: "That's the head size and the strong stem."

People's Choice

'MADIBA'

Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers

Named to honor Nelson Mandela, after the nickname by which he was affectionately known, 'Madiba' has the commanding presence of other king protea varieties (*Protea cynaroides*) but is conveniently smaller than most. The entry, also a Blue Ribbon winner, has red-pink bracts surrounding a center dome of furry white florets and glossy, deep green leaves. 'Madiba' can open well in water even after it is cut and shipped rather tightly closed, to protect the tips of the bracts. Like other proteas, it offers an extraordinary vase life of two weeks or more.



Blue Ribbon Winners

Orientals and Oriental Trumpet Lilies

Orientals and Oriental Trumpet Lily Blue Ribbon winners make strong candidates for event work, with a dramatic presence, even from a distance. **'African Lady,'** buttercream **'Serrano,'** rich pink **'Dalian'** and vivid **'Metropolitan'** all offer large blooms with striking color, facing both outward and upward. Freckles that usually cluster at a lily's throat are sprinkled evenly over the thick petals of **'Tigermoon';** they would combine beautifully with flowers in a solid burgundy. Pure white **'Zambesi'** is a shoo-in for wedding work, while **'Firebolt'** hits just the right shade of deep violet-red: dark enough for drama, but light enough to show up in photography, with a ruffled edge to the petals and contrasting light green stamens.



'TIGERMOON'
Oriental Lily
The Sun Valley Group



'FIREBOLT'
Oriental Lily
Green Valley Floral



'METROPOLITAN'
Oriental Lily
Holland America Flowers



'AFRICAN LADY'
Oriental Trumpet Lily
The Sun Valley Group



'SERRANO'
Oriental Trumpet Lily
Green Valley Floral



'DALIAN'
Oriental Trumpet Lily
Oregon Flowers



'ZAMBESI'
Oriental Trumpet Lily
Oregon Flowers



'ZAMBESI'
Oriental Trumpet Lily
Green Valley Floral

Roselilies

Marketed as Roselilies, double-flowered Oriental lilies have come a long way since they were introduced commercially in 2000. Pollen-free and bearing only a light fragrance, they are usually shipped with nylon socks enfolding and protecting the many-petaled blooms. Pull off the socks, and the Roselilies open right away. "We get them in whenever we can, and we find that customers really like them," said Chinery, who particularly admired **'Isabella'** for its petite size and relatively compact branching. The newest varieties come in colors ranging from pure white to a rich dark pink.



'ISABELLA'
The Sun Valley Group



'SAMANTHA'
Equiflor/Rio Roses



'CELINA'
The Sun Valley Group



'DEJIMA'
The Sun Valley Group

LA Lilies

Ever since breeders started crossing *longiflorum* with Asiatic lilies a quarter century ago, this category has shown stunning results. At SAF Palm Springs 2018, judges singled out **'Royal Sunset,'** a tiger lily that combines a candy-corn yellow-orange throat with coral pink tips, and **'Eyeliner,'** porcelain white, with a peppered throat and a fine dark pencil line that outlines the inner three petals against the outer three.



'EYELINER'
Holland America Flowers



'ROYAL SUNSET'
Holland America Flowers

Chrysanthemums

"We're seeing a mum revival, and it's because we're getting such interesting varieties," noted Waterous. The winning entries combined athletic size and strength with show-biz personalities, covering the wide range of chrysanthemum types, from cushion mums such as **'Andrea'** and **'Veronica,'** in magenta and blush pink, or **'Magnum Yellow,'** with a vase life of 24 days, to novelties such as **'Roma Festa,'** with yellow spoons outlined in red, and **'Serenity,'** with striped petals in purple and white. **'Fuzzball'** adds another, much-desired vivid light green to designers' palettes; **'Lorax,'** a dark pink. The slender, pointed petals of **'Tiana Dark'** seem to be unfolding before your eyes, while the aptly named **'Sol'** will add solid rays of sunshine to any bouquet.



'FUZZBALL'
Deliflor Latin America



'SERENITY'
Deliflor Latin America



'LORAX'
Deliflor Latin America



'ANDREA'
Dümmen Orange



'VERONICA'
Dümmen Orange



'MAGNUM YELLOW'
Deliflor Latin America



'ROMA FESTA'
Deliflor Latin America



'SOL'
Deliflor Latin America



'TIANA DARK'
Deliflor Latin America

Dianthus

Like 'Alma,' **'Zeppelin'** might seem at first like the most ordinary of familiar flowers. A closer look reveals a gem, with large, round flowers in an unusually bright and vivid shade of red. Small, firm, curling leaves, widely separated, adorn the strong stem.



'ZEPPELIN'
Dümmen Orange

Gerberas

Strong, saturated color has long been a selling point for those who love gerberas. This year's winning entries were no exception. In many, the rows of petalettes surrounding the central eye were thicker than usual, yielding a ruffled look, another step removed from the petal formation of a simple daisy. For designers looking for a smaller flower, winners included two mini gerberas: raspberry-and-cream **'Manolo'** and neon-magenta **'Picture Perfect.'**

'SILVERSNOW'
Green Valley Floral



'PANAMA'
Green Valley Floral



'TERRA EZRA'
Green Valley Floral



'HUMBERTO'
Green Valley Floral



'TERRA LAURO'
Green Valley Floral

'TERRA EZRA'
Dümmen Orange



'ALCOLEA'
Dümmen Orange

GERMINI 'MANOLO'
Dümmen Orange



GERMINI 'PICTURE PERFECT'
Dümmen Orange

Potted Flowering Plants

'Gigi Parade' bears candy-striped flowers that open wide. And this plant has staying power. It does well when replanted in a garden (a good tidbit to share with gift-giving customers).

'Posy Parade' was recognized for its on-trend color, blending from pink to apricot.



'GIGI PARADE'
Potted Rose
Poulsen Roser A/S

'POSY PARADE'
Potted Rose
Poulsen Roser A/S



Standard and Garden Roses

There's no doubt that the popularity of garden roses, as selected and grown for the cut-flower market, has influenced rose breeding overall. That's a good thing, said Callister: "I love that I can buy something like **'Moonstone'** packed in bunches of 25." Blue Ribbon rose entries approached the style of true garden roses, with a multitude of frilly petals that may even have a "quartered" look, versus the clean spiral of traditional hybrid teas. Many winning entries have outer petals with a distinctive look: greenish on blush-colored roses and darkened or variegated on roses in other colors. The one true garden rose among the winning entries, **'Tiara'** boasts a rare shade of dark lavender, with outer petals in antique green.



'FLAMINGO'
Standard Rose
Rosaprima



'AMOROSA'
Standard Rose
Ecuagarden Group



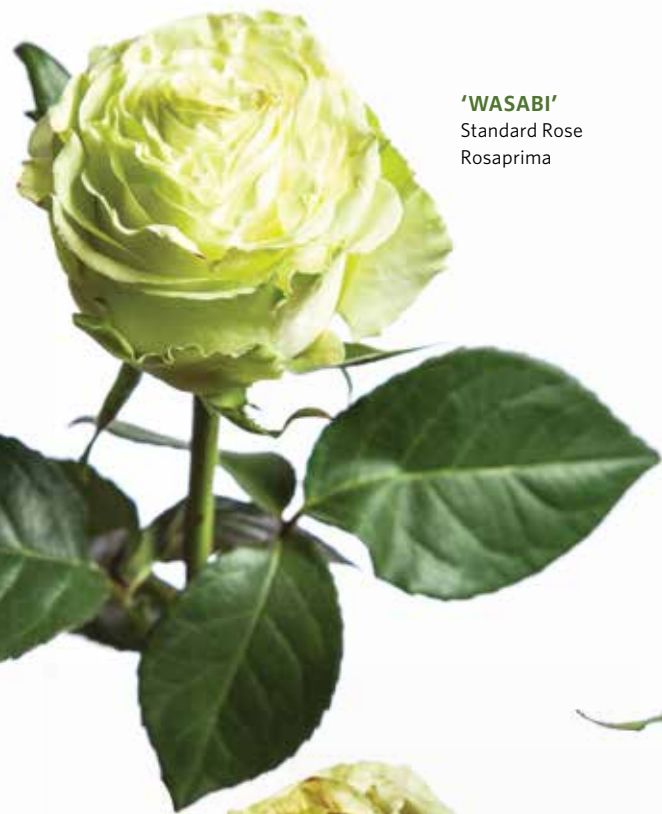
'GERALDINE'
Standard Rose
Esprit Miami



'PINK MONDIAL'
Standard Rose
Equiflor/Rio Roses



'PINK MONDIAL'
Standard Rose
Ecuagarden Group



'WASABI'
Standard Rose
Rosaprima



'APPLAUSE'
Standard Rose
Fresca Farms



'DYNAMIC'
Standard Rose
HojaVerde Cia.



'MOONSTONE'
Standard Rose
Esprit Miami



'TIARA'
Garden Rose
Alexandra Farms



'REGATTA'
Standard Rose
Royal Flowers



'ORANGE CRUSH'
Standard Rose
Esprit Miami



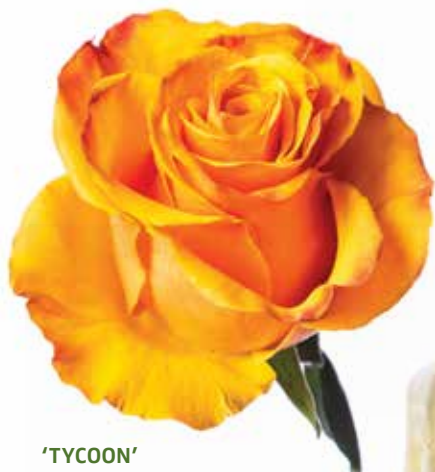
'CONFIDENTIAL'
Standard Rose
Rosaprima



'YELLOW KING'
Hybrid Tea Rose
Equiflor/Rio Roses



'FREE SPIRIT'
Standard Rose
Esprit Miami



'TYCOON'
Standard Rose
Ayura S.A.S.



'PEACH AVALANCHE'
Standard Rose
HojaVerde Cia.



'SHIMMER'
Standard Rose
Rosaprima

Spray Roses

In spray roses, a garden look is also on-trend, with an abundance of flowers on a single stem, plus a few tight buds among the blooms for textural variety. Blue Ribbon winners in this strong category ranged in color from white and cream to peach, yellow and orange, with a jolt of hot pink in the form of **'Mystic Gem.'**



'MILVA'
Standard Rose
Jet Fresh Flower Distributors



'SILANTOI'
Standard Rose
Dümmen Orange



'BRIDAL VEIL'
Eufhoria Flowers



'BRIDAL BOUQUET'
Eufhoria Flowers

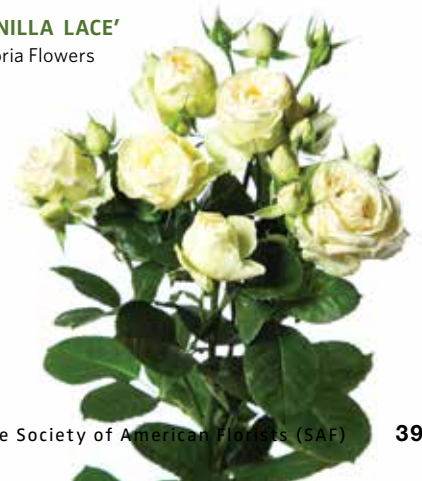


'MYSTIC GEM'
Eufhoria Flowers



'PORCELINA'
Equiflor/Rio Roses

'VANILLA LACE'
Eufhoria Flowers



Other Cut Flowers

In the garden-flower vein, **'Erica,'** an exceptionally tall, feathery, dusty-pink astilbe, so big the lower laterals could be used separately in hand bouquets, caught the eye of competition judges.

'Premium White' hydrangea impressed with its size and pristine health. With heavily berried branches, **'Autumn Spirit'** ilex looks ready to ring in the fall season, with a hint of holidays to come.

For exotic touches that blend beautifully with more traditional florist flowers, **'Kauai,'** an extra-large, heavily textured anthurium in a pale lime green, offers both novelty and design versatility. Impressively large sprays of **'Melemeie'** oncidium orchids greeted visitors to the Outstanding Varieties exhibit; the graceful, bright green stems seemed to play a more important role than usual, laden with abundant flowers in pure yellow, without red or brown variegation. **'Arctic Ice,'** a king protea in creamy white, could make a striking focal point in an adventurous bridal bouquet, paired with dainty flowers (serruria or matricaria). "This is a break-the-rules kind of flower," Waterous said. 🌿

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'AUTUMN SPIRIT'
Ilex
The Sun Valley Group



'MELEMEIE'
Oncidium
Green Point Nurseries



'ARCTIC ICE'
Protea
Resendiz Brothers
Protea Growers



'PREMIUM WHITE'
Hydrangea
Arvi Farms/Groflowers

'ERICA'
Astilbe
The Sun Valley Group



'KAUAI'
Anthurium
Green Point Nurseries



Standard Bearers

The Society of American Florists gratefully acknowledges the commitment, time and expertise of its 2018 Outstanding Varieties Competition judges:

Retailers

Rakini Chinery, AAF, AzMF, of Allan's Flowers in Prescott, Arizona

Karen Fountain, AAF, of Flowers 'n' Ferns in Burke, Virginia

Lynne Tischler, AAF, CPFD, PFCI of Your Enchanted Florist in St. Paul, Minnesota

Wholesalers

Lani Callister of Ensign Wholesale Floral in Salt Lake City, Utah

Adam Van Winkle of Cascade Floral Wholesale in Everett, Washington

Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, PFCI, of Nordlie in Grandville, Michigan

Growers

Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF, research coordinator at the American Floral Endowment

Leo Roozen, AAF, of Washington Bulb Company in Mount Vernon, Washington

Dan Vordale of Ocean View Flowers in Lompoc, California

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GO DEEPER

For a complete list of Best in Class, Blue and Red Ribbon winners, along with a list of exhibiting companies, contact information, and additional information on winning varieties, please visit safnow.org/moreonline.