



ROMANTIC REDS

Elyse Gaynor, owner of Bella's Floral Design in Lynnfield, Massachusetts, sees deep, rich reds in vogue for 2022.

Trend Setters

Growers, florists and other industry experts reveal which trends they're watching in 2022.

BY VICTORIA ABBOTT RICCARDI

Just like trends in fashion, floral trends come and go, driven by popular culture, consumer buying habits and new varieties of flowers and foliage. For the past two years, there's been another influencer — the pandemic. It has sparked a number of unique trends, including an increased demand for colorful palettes to brighten work-from-home spaces and add cheer to scaled-down events. Neutral-colored flowers sold well, too, due to their gentle, calming tones. In some cases, new trends emerged because of flower shortages, such as the popularity of spray roses, which florists substituted for popular varieties of single-stem roses when they were difficult to get.





FROM WHOLESALE TO RETAIL Kennicott Kuts began selling to retail customers in response to strong demand for flowers.

We asked growers, florists and other industry experts which trends they expect this year given the ongoing inventory issues and pent-up demand for weddings and other events.

Industry experts predict supply issues for florals and floral supplies will continue into this year. COVID-19 outbreaks at international factories and ports combined with an increase in demand for goods sparked a domino effect of supply chain failures. Backlogs at ports, a shortage of truck drivers, and other business factors drastically reduced the availability of floral supplies in 2021.

Take containers, for example. “We’re taking whatever we can get,” says Raya Ward, general manager of Nielsen’s

Florist & Garden Shop in Darien, Connecticut. “For some of the signature containers that we rely on for our look, we’ve really had to scramble. As a result, we’re already looking ahead for our container inventory.”

The same struggle exists regarding some types of florals. A combination of factors, from weather to transportation logistics — as well as unprecedented demand — has made some types of flowers nearly impossible to get.

At the height of wedding season last fall, white roses were particularly hard to get, says Juan Carlos Aguilar, sales and procurement manager at Dramm Echter Farms in Encinitas, California, which grows and partners with local and international farms to provide customers with

flowers and foliage. “So many weddings from last year were pushed into 2022 and even 2023 and more couples are getting engaged. So, everyone is saying that 2022 will be no different than 2021.”

Pent-up demand has increased business, a trend likely to endure through 2022 and into 2023. For Stacie Lee Banks, president and co-owner of Lee’s Flower and Card Shop in Washington, D.C., and a member of the Society of American Florists’ board of directors, business has never been better. “We were affected by COVID, but in a positive way,” she says. “In the last two years, we’ve tripled our business and not just for sympathy work, but everyday work. You’ll find this industry-wide — people are sending a lot more flowers

WEDDINGS GALORE The amount of wedding work has doubled, tripled and in some cases quadrupled since COVID-19 restrictions have eased.

because it was [and still is] the contactless way to send your love.”

“My business is off the charts,” says Elyse Gaynor, owner of Bella’s Floral Design in Lynnfield, Massachusetts. “My wedding work has quadrupled from two years ago. I never did a Wednesday wedding until [2021] and now I’m doing multiple ones on Wednesdays, Sundays and Fridays. 2022 is going to be even stronger than 2021, particularly as more venues open up.”

“The demand for flowers is crazy,” says Stephen Kennicott, a grower with Kennicott Kuts, a specialty cut flower grower (particularly peonies) with farms in the U.S. and Chile. Before the pandemic, he says his company focused mainly on wholesale, but at the height of the pandemic, they added retail. “We went from almost zero retail — and this is including one-time buyers — to now having over 900 customers.” Kennicott, a member of SAF’s board of directors, believes that 2022 is going to be a strong year, too, which is why he’s planning to increase his plantings.

Consumers want florals on both sides of the color spectrum — happy, bright colors and tranquil, neutral tones. The Pantone Color Institute’s New York Fashion Week Spring and Summer 2022 palette reflects the nation’s “need for calm and comfort” along with a “free-spirited optimism and joyful adventure.” The grounding, comforting tones include sapphire blue (Skydiver), earth brown (Coca Mocha), blue-green (Harbor Blue), ice blue (Glacier Lake), baby blue (Spun Sugar) and pale pink (Gossamer Pink). In contrast, the playful, festive colors include hot pink (Innuendo), bright yellow (Daffodil), fiery red (Poinciana) and chartreuse (Dahlia). Pantone’s color predictions go hand in hand with the Flower Council of Holland’s 2022 Horticulture Sector Trends, which are: Fresh Start (whites and bright accent colors), Bright and Breezy (Funfetti cake colors), Traditional Sentiment (faded pastels and darker secure colors) and Wellness Bubble (watery pales).



SHUTTERSTOCK/ ALEX GUKALOV



PRIMARY COLORS Jennifer Barnard, co-owner of Tillie's Flower Shop in Wichita, Kansas, uses red roses and bright yellow sunflowers in her designs.

"I'm seeing both colorful and neutral hues" in demand, says Jennifer Barnard, co-owner of Tillie's Flower Shop in Wichita, Kansas, and a member of SAF's board of directors. On the one hand, "Red roses and sunflowers seem to be a popular combination. I thought it was just a Kansas thing, but when I talk to other florists, red roses and sunflowers are a big thing for them as well." Barnard also expects the bohemian look to stick around, as well as a desire for wildflowers and sunflowers. "We're also seeing lots of dried flowers because people are just gravitating to that natural Joanna Gaines, Magnolia style, which brings a sense of peace."

Gaynor sees the same nature-inspired trend. "The boho look is really popular in the younger generation, and the latest rage is the pampas grass, the bleached, dried eucalyptus and dried flowers in general," she says. "And then I'm finding, too, that people want more simplistic palettes — using all ivories and whites and beige and keeping it a monochromatic scheme," to create a cleaner, more soothing aesthetic at home where they're spending more time. Mixed metallics for vases and botanicals, such as eucalyptus and tree branches sprayed silver, copper and gold, are popular among her clients. Gaynor has even resorted to spray-painting metallics on containers — particularly the glass pedestal vases that she can't source in gold and silver.

Banks says her wedding couples want soft, gentle colors. "I'm seeing a lot of the blush colors, white and green and wood tones in the containers," she says. "We're also doing a lot of sympathy and people tend to stick with the whites and greens — the more neutral colors."

Aguilar sees a lot of requests for pale, romantic tones for weddings. "People want the light peach, the sand colors, the whites, antique colors, like those rose-gold iPhones," he says.

The flowers trending are those that can be used as a substitute for what's in short supply. For example, when single stem roses are hard to procure, Aguilar is pushing spray roses. "They're flying out of here," he says. "You have four or five blooms on one stem, compared to only a single bloom, and get more volume, which brings up the value of



A ROSE IS A ROSE Spray roses grew in popularity because single stem roses were at times hard to come by.

your investment.” Rose lilies and chrysanthemums in unusual shapes and colors are popular as well, along with English-style roses.

The flower shortage has also shifted the power dynamic between florist and consumer. Rather than a bride requesting flowers in specific shades, such as the uber-popular Quicksand rose, florists — and growers — are now in the position to sell a look. For instance, when the Quicksand rose isn’t available, Aguilar will offer his customers similarly colored alternatives.

The loose, European garden-style look is in vogue. “The garden style has taken over from the tight, round, symmetrical look,” says Gaynor, noting influences from Europe. “I think we’ve always just looked to Europe because, from a design perspective, they’re just more advanced and set the trends.”

“A lot of designers go to Europe and then bring back what they’re seeing,” says Robert Sabia, AIFD, head designer at Nielsen’s Florist & Garden Shop. “It’s that natural, airy European garden-style look that I don’t think is going to go away.”

“The floral industry is far more global for inspiration than it has been ever,” says Ward. “So, you’ve got people who are at home, who are designing for themselves and going online looking at different ideas and then putting it out there on Instagram or TikTok.” Ward’s brides all want cascading bouquets that, according to Social and Personal Weddings, a Dublin, Ireland-based digital newsletter, have become all the rage. Princess Diana carried a cascading bouquet, as did Kate Middleton.

Floral subscriptions are popular as people see flowers less as a luxury item

than a way to boost joy and well-being at home. “Subscriptions have taken off for us,” says Gaynor. “There are far more home offices and [people] want to have something pretty to look at. They also know that if they do a subscription, florists will often give a discount or free delivery, which is what we do.”

Barnard’s shop offers weekly, biweekly, and monthly subscriptions, which her clients pick up at her shop. Barnard spoke with other florists across the country at SAF’s annual convention, and says they are also seeing subscriptions growing in popularity.

In the same way that Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has grown in popularity for vegetables, so too, have CSAs from local flower farms, such as Tiny Hearts Farm in upstate New York. In 2020, the 25-acre organic flower farm sold out its floral subscription. “The



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TRENDY HOUSEPLANTS Houseplants continue to grow in popularity throughout the country.

demand for flowers was amazing with everyone forced to stay at home,” says Luke Franco, who owns and manages the farm with his wife. In 2021, the farm stopped selling CSA share in May, having already reached capacity in terms of what they could grow.

Piggy-backing on the floral subscription trend is the explosion of floral workshops, virtual and in-person. “Prior to the pandemic, our in-person classes were hugely popular,” Ward says. “Then virtual became popular and now we’re back to in-person classes and the demand is high.”

“I know from talking with other flower shops it’s been a huge trend and virtual workshops have been really popular through COVID,” Barnard says. “Now, people are really enjoying getting back in person.”

Florists are capitalizing on consumers’ desire to support local businesses by offering locally made products as add-ons. Even before the pandemic, Gaynor often paired arrangements with chocolates from a local maker, as well as all-natural spa products, such as bath salts, lotions and soy-based candles from a local purveyor. “Customers are really making an effort to support these small local businesses,” she says.

“Because of the pandemic, so many people just want to support the community. So we’ve brought in a local bakery and featured her cake and people loved it,” Barnard says. “The concept continues to grow. People want to go big, send the flowers, the cake, the balloon — all of it.”

In addition to a surge in demand for flowers, consumers’ passion for houseplants shows no signs of slowing.

“The trend for houseplants just seems to keep growing,” says Barnard, “so much so, that every city has these plant shops dedicated to only selling plants. These shops are creating community and may [collaborate] with live bands or coffee shops as people shop for new plants and learn how to take care of them. Here in Wichita, we have three plant shops that have popped up in the last year and they’re going strong.”

“Our plant business has doubled,” says Banks, “and plants became so popular we couldn’t keep them in stock.” The hottest sellers include easy-to-grow, new and exotic varieties, along with succulents, particularly grouped together in “gardens.” 🌿

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