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FLORAL MARKETING 

## Spring brings many opportunities to celebrate with exotic proteaceae

By DIANA ROY

When spring arrives, many opportunities for celebrating are at hand. Consider the months of March, April and May with International Women's Day (March 8), Administrative Professionals Day (April 25) and Mother's Day (May 13) as well as St. Patrick's Day (March 17) and Easter (April 8). All these occasions provide the perfect opportunity to give and to enjoy flowers.

Flowers say so much. Their color, texture, form and combination tell a story and create a mood. This spring, more consumers will seek an exotic mood with gorgeous proteaceae. The possibilities are endless with approximately 73 genera and more than 1,500 species in the proteaceae family, and from time to time a new species is discovered.

Adding to the intrigue of this plant family is the ever-increasing number of cultivars being developed. These cultivars or hybrids often have significant advantages because they are usually developed and grown with the intent to satisfy the cut-flower industry with better colors, longer and



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straighter stems, and increased vase life.

Some of the most popular and best-known genera of the proteaceae are Banksia, Grevillea, Leucadendron, Leucospermum Pincushion and Protea, the one for which this family is named. Each of these unique members has a significant number of species, Banksia with approximately 75, Grevillea 273, Leucadendron 80, Leucospermum 48 and Protea with 136 species.

Another thing to consider is just how different the various members of this family are. It is amazing that the spidery flower of a Grevillea, the mas-



This colorful and exotic proteaceae bouquet blends reds, yellows and greens in a flowery song of spring.

sive cones of a Banksia, the colorful flowering Leucadendron, the pin-filled Leucospermum and the cup-shaped Protea are all proteaceae. Even their foliage varies greatly, from narrow, serrated and needle-like, to large, broad and leathery, to soft and covered with silky hairs.

It is no wonder that Protea are being seen more frequently in bouquets, arrangements and displays — they make a unique and exotic statement. Their strong colors and strik-

ing appearance make them the ideal choice for the floral merchandiser looking to create his or her own style and escape from the typical bouquet.

As one grocery store merchandiser recently explained, "Protea mixed with other flowers, such as roses, hydrangeas and Lisianthus, or Leucospermum combined with tulips, Gerberas and lilies just takes a bouquet up a notch, adding a little something different. Another option we offer is a Protea

bouquet, which in the spring is combined with Leucospermum, Protea, Leucadendron, Grevillea and Berzelia. Each bouquet is unique, colorful, has wonderful texture, offers exceptional vase life and it's affordable."

Proteaceae flowers and foliage are available year round, with spring providing the most abundant selection. During this time of the year, many of the new hybrid Protea and Leucospermum are in bloom, the Leucadendron flowers and develops cones, and some of the lesser known members like Berzelia, Telopea, Serruria and Isopogon are also in bloom.

The season's most popular varieties are Protea Brenda and Pink Duke, Leucospermum Flame Giant and High Gold, as well as Leucadendron Gold Strike and Discolor.

So, this spring, let proteaceae make every day exotic.

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