

## FCI matchmakes the wedding flower market altogether in a global webinar

On 25 October 2021, FloraCulture International (FCI), supported by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH), and Flower Academy Italy, brought together an impressive line-up of expert international industry speakers to focus on the wedding flowers market.



Six hundred and forty-two delegates registered from 47 countries, proving that the wedding flowers market *matters* as we all move on from the virus chaos that stopped wedding celebrations worldwide in 2020.

The conversation was on how the pandemic had impacted sales and what's happening now, and what our industry can expect for months to come when the world continues to open its borders again.

The webinar was a hybrid format streaming live from the Villa Mosconi Bertani estate in Italy to alternating interviews with wholesalers, horticulture trade show organisers, and magazine editors from their offices worldwide.

Opening the event was His Excellency Mr Willem van Ee, the Dutch ambassador to Italy. His key message was the need for cooperation between florists, producers, and distributors to regain the vitality of the wedding flowers industry after the pandemic.

At the 17th Century Italian venue, Patrizia Braida from Bloom's Accademy provided a visual treat for the viewers with floral designs using the quintessential romantic 'Avalanche+' roses with tropical delights from Anthurium 'Extase'.

Italy is known for being Europe's largest producer of ornamentals with an estimated 27,000 companies operating on 30,000 hectares of land, says Charles Lansdorp, former Italian Area Manager of the Flower Council of Holland. He asks Braida what brides want now, given that the global wedding market was reported to be over \$300bn pre-Covid. She replies in Italy that prices are going up, and this is not deterring couples who wish to celebrate. For many brides, they are choosing outdoor ceremonies in spectacular locations. Braida emphasis 'going that extra mile' for brides means choosing wholesalers she can rely upon to deliver just-in-time.

Reinier Haasnoot from Dutch-based OZ Export explained that the current challenges in delivering right now are higher fuel prices and less airfreight capacity. He agrees that wedding flowers are unique to each event and that the challenges of providing something 'extra special' are not impossible. He uses the example of if a bride wants white peonies in winter, it will cost, but logistics can be overcome. The importance of delivery is coordinating well with customers and having great relationships with growers.

The transformation of Villa Mosconi Bertani was also for the benefit of a fashion shoot for *White Sposa* magazine. Simona Polli, the chief editor of the Italian wedding magazine, spoke about how 90% of weddings were postponed in 2020 and now many are reconnecting and planning for their big days in 2022. She says that as a magazine, she receives lots of stories from real brides, who can spend from 3,000 euros up to 500,000 on flowers, including bridal bouquets, boutonnieres, table pieces, archways, and venue installations.

Jules Lewis Gibson, president of *Florists' Review*, provided an update on the American wedding flowers market. She said that many had to deal with the same cancellation challenges. The problems now for retail and studio florists are three times higher costs, and American brides don't skimp on floral decorations. She did talk about brides looking

for greener sustainable options. There is also emerging in America, a full-service floral department in supermarkets as a viable alternative option for couples.

In 2020, Myplant&Garden were the first international horticultural trade show to cancel due to COVID-19, Valeria Randazzo and Filippo Faccioli, the event organisers talked candidly about the effects on the industry but positively about new innovations. They promise for next year's event, between 23-25 February, there will be a spectacular Wedding Pavilion at the forthcoming show.

The event ended with an online panel discussion with each guest speaker talking further about the global wedding flower market that contributes so much to the worldwide economy.

The recording of this event is available to watch on YouTube.