

fresh focus

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Jewel tones in spring? Yes! And silky whites, too.



Anemone
Anemone coronaria,
Anemone spp.

Vase life
4 to 8 days

Bunch size
10 stems

Availability
October through
May is peak season

A COOL-SEASON CROP, anemones are now available almost year-round, thanks to sources in both the northern and the southern hemispheres. They remain, however, quintessentially a spring flower.

We're speaking, of course, of poppy anemones—*Anemone coronaria*—the bright, bold flowers that indeed resemble poppies, but with silky rather than papery petals, in a different range of hues—on the blue-purple rather than the orange and yellow side of the color wheel—and with a ruffled green collar added just below the flower head. Poppy anemones grow from tubers, typically on leafless stems (like tulips and many other

spring bulb flowers) about 12 to 18 inches long.

In the late summer and early fall—just when poppy anemones are least abundant—you may sometimes encounter another type of anemone, with longer stems and fibrous roots. The "Japanese anemone"—*A. x hybrid*—is one such. It bears

delicate flowers, usually white, light pink, or lavender, on stems as high as two, three, or even four feet. "They have laterals and a gardeny feel," describes Tricia Tang from Mayesh Wholesale Florist, who notes that she has only seen them from California growers.

The rest of the year, in the cut-flower market, "anemone" generally means poppy anemones. The spring months are when these anemones are at their lavish best. This is the only time of year when field-grown anemones are available. Production in greenhouses or hoop houses extends the season, and may offer other advantages as well. "The greenhouse anemones tend to be a bit longer in the stem and have a wider range of colors," says Barbara Schnur of Brannan Street Wholesale Florist in San Francisco. "The field-grown anemones tend to be in the blue, fuchsia, and purple range—the dark, jewel tones."

Spring is also when anemones are more abundantly available from domestic growers. "We buy them local, as much as we can," says Joost Bongaerts of Florabundance, the California-based direct shipper of wholesale cut flowers, "then from Holland or Italy." (Anemones purchased through the Dutch auctions may well have been grown in Italy or Israel.) At Mayesh, Tricia notes that demand rises during the most popular wedding months, such as October and June. That's when she's more likely to reach out to Holland or Chile to meet the needs of her customers.

A bear market

Anemones have been extensively bred to increase their color choices and flower form. For many years, anemones in the Mona Lisa series, with large flowers in white, purple, pink, and red on stems 10 to 18 inches long, have found favor in the marketplace. In the past several years, however, a newer series called Marianne has been gaining on Mona Lisa.

Often sold in mixed color bunches, anemones are available in red, purple, pink, white, blue, and bi-color selections. They also come in single, semi-double and double flower forms, ranging from a simple ring of flat, brightly colored sepals (the correct botanical term for anemone "petals") to a frilly cluster. Photos are from the Mayesh Wholesale Florist Flower Library, an information resource for floral professionals at www.mayesh.com.

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The hottest variety on the market today, much in demand for weddings, is 'Panda', white with a black center. 'Panda' photo is courtesy of the Flower Council of Holland (www.flowercouncil.org).

'Panda' was introduced in the Marianne series as long ago as 2003, but has never enjoyed more popularity than at the present moment. (Dutch exporter Greenwings reports sales of approximately 2,000 stems a week.) Where other white anemones have a green center, stylish 'Panda' has a black one. The look is so much in demand that when 'Panda' is unobtainable or unaffordable, some designers have resorted to imitations: a white lisianthus, for example, with a dark scabiosa bud tucked into its heart.

Open and shut

Anemones should be harvested when the flowers have just begun to open—when the

sepals first separate from the center of the flower. "A tight bud is good," says Gay Smith, technical consulting manager for Chrysal Americas, "because once they're in solution, anemones open fast in light and in a warm environment." As garden flowers, anemones open during the day and close up at night, and you may witness this tendency in cut flowers as well.

Like tulips, anemones will continue to grow in the vase, especially if ambient temperatures are warm. If laid down horizontally, the stems will tend to curve—a good reason to store anemones upright, and of course at cool temperatures. Customers should be advised to keep the flowers relatively cool, if possible—yet in winter, abundant light will also help the flowers color up.

Anemones can benefit from a flower-food solution specific for bulb flowers. "The bulb-food formulation rebalances cell chemistry," replacing the hormones that go missing when a bulb flower is cut from its bulb or tuber, Gay explains. "It also keeps the water clean, all of which maximizes vase life." Anemones also do well in a low-sugar solution, like the holding solutions normally used for storing flowers. The sugar in flower food provides the energy needed to open buds—but anemones open easily, even in plain water. They do need a little sugar to maintain vibrant color, says Gay.

What's in a name?

Competing legends and notions vie to explain the origin of the name anemone, which means "windflower" in Greek. The simplest is that anemones bear fluffy seeds that are borne away by the wind to propagate the flower. Like many flowers sensitive to ethylene, anemones are also vulnerable to a shattering of the flower head, in which case, the detached sepals, perhaps slightly shriveled but still bright and colorful, may likewise be carried away by the wind.

Another explanation traces the name to that of a Sumerian and Phoenician god, Nea'man, who was later identified with the Greek Adonis, called the "mortal god" of beauty and desire. When the handsome Adonis, beloved of Aphrodite, was killed by a wild boar, the goddess is said to have mingled her tears with his blood, whence the anemone sprang. Although the story is sad, it's fitting for a flower of rare beauty and graceful form. 🌸

Care tips anemones

- Select flowers that are 50 percent open, but with the sepals (brightly colored flower parts) still unfurled. Avoid bunches with all the flowers fully open or with uncolored buds.
- Anemones are highly sensitive to ethylene. Treat with an ethylene inhibitor following manufacturer's instructions.
- The proper use of floral food is essential for maximum vase life for anemones, as the stems can be easily damaged from incomplete floral food mixing or improper floral food concentrations.
- Condition at room temperature for 30 minutes, then place in a floral refrigerator at 36 to 38 degrees F and 85 percent humidity. If stems are soft or the flowers are wilted, keep them wrapped during conditioning to help keep them straight.
- It is not recommended that anemones and daffodils be used in the same vase design, as the daffodil sap will greatly shorten the vase life of the anemones.



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Sources

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www.brannanstf.com

Florabundance
www.florabundance.com

Greenwings
www.greenwings.nl

Mayesh Wholesale Florist
www.mayesh.com