

What Your Cut Flowers Want You to Know About Them

Practical Tips for Bringing Your Garden Flowers Inside

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Your garden is ablaze with luxurious blossoms and you cannot resist bringing some cut flowers inside for table arrangements or casual bouquets. You select and cut the flowers anticipating a lovely bunch, but when your flowers turn into a wilted mess, you are disappointed and wonder what happened. Here are some things cut flowers would tell you if you had a conversation with them.

Keep me wet — Cut your flowers in the early to mid-morning while they still retain moisture from the morning dew. If you wait until noon, they will already have started to dry out. After cutting, put them in cool water immediately until you are ready to make your arrangement. Cut the stems on an angle to promote optimal water uptake.

Keep me cold — If you do not plan to use your flowers right away, keep them cool in the refrigerator at a temperature from 34 to 45 degrees. Do not store them in the same place where you are keeping apples. Flowers wither and die when exposed to apples and the polyethylene gas they exude when refrigerated.

Make sure I'm fed — Use a packet of commercial floral conditioner or make your own conditioning solution keep the flowers fat and happy. Conditioned flowers maintain their beauty for four to five days whereas hungry flowers can wilt and die overnight. A quick and easy conditioning recipe includes: 1-quart cool water, 1 teaspoon sugar and 1 tablespoon household bleach. The conditioning liquid provides a source of carbohydrates uncut flowers normally derive from their host plant, and you inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria through the addition of bleach. If you change the water every day and add new conditioning liquid, your flowers can last up to a week or more.

Keep me clean — When you have selected a container for your bouquet, fill with water and then remove any foliage or blossoms that will fall below the water line. Soggy foliage or flowers decay quickly, attract bacteria, and create a nasty smelling bog for a lovely bouquet. Beautiful blossoms last longer in clean water.



Giant Zinnias and Foliage Accents

photo: Mississippi State University Extension



photo: Texas A&M University

Choose a container with plenty of room — Select a container that allows a little breathing space around each flower and has enough room for plenty of water. Too many flowers in a too small container limits water uptake and does not permit adequate extra space for conditioning liquid.

Keep me out of direct sunlight — Place your bouquet in a shady space to keep it cool and out of the deadly heat of the sun. If you do use a sunny space for display, limit exposure to the sun, and continue to add water to keep the flowers hydrated.

Bring on the floral spray — To prevent transpiration and water loss, use a floral spray available from a floral supply or garden center. It is a hydrating agent to keep your flowers looking fresh, and it will make your foliage glossy and last longer. Spray it on after you have finished the arrangement.

Don't give up on me — If you have a bunch of wilted, soggy flowers or flowers that refuse to bloom fully, you can revive them with cool water and conditioning fluid. Recut the stems on an angle and plunge them into water immediately. Normally, wilted flowers will revive if treated with care.

References

- [Floral Designs from your Backyard](#), Whittlesey, Lisa. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Benz School of Floral Design at Texas A&M University, April 8, 2020 (Video)
- [Floral Design Class Teaches Students Flower Power](#), Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Science (Video)