

GETTING CUT FLOWERS TO LAST



Is it February already? Where has the time gone? It seems like we were just celebrating the dawn of a new year. The groundhog has seen its shadow so that means six more weeks of winter. Spring just can't get here fast enough!

Later this month many of us will be celebrating Valentine's Day by sending our loved ones some beautiful flowers to brighten their day. Those flowers don't have to be here today and gone tomorrow. There are ways to extend their life for days with a little special care.

If you will be cutting flowers from your own yard, select ones that are not yet in full bloom. Carry a container of warm water with you to the garden and place the flowers in it immediately after cutting. Cut the stems with sharp pruners or shears, being careful not to tear or smash the stems since this will interfere with water intake. Leave the flowers in the warm water for about two hours before you start arranging them so they can take in as much water as they can hold.

Be sure to always use a clean container for cut flower arrangements. If you use a vase that is not clean, it may contain bacteria that will multiply and block water-conducting tubes in the flower stems. Remove any foliage below the water line. Decaying foliage in the water contributes to bacterial buildup.

It is always best to add a commercial flower preservative or some type of lemon-lime soda or lemon juice and add a few drops of household bleach to the water if possible. Either of these provides some food, in the form of sugar, and inhibits bacterial growth. If you will be purchasing cut flowers, be sure to recut the stems removing 1/2 to 1 inch and place the flowers in warm water. Then you should treat the water as mentioned above. Cut Flower arrangements will last longer if they are kept cool. Don't expose your arrangements to direct sun, heat from lights, or hot or cold drafts. Move it to a cooler spot or if possible place them in the refrigerator overnight. Heat will extract moisture from the flowers at a high rate. Recut the stems, change the water and add more flower preservative every third day. This will give those cut flowers the extended life needed for you and yours to enjoy. My wife definitely enjoys fresh flowers!

Until next time, happy gardening!



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