



Harvesting & Hydrating Flowers from the Garden

A QUICK GUIDE TO GATHERING AND SHARING
GORGEOUS BLOOMS FROM YOUR GARDEN.

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HARVEST & HYDRATION

TIPS AND TRICKS FROM THE PROS



- Cut floral stems in the morning when plants have recovered from the heat of the prior day and are not stressed.
- Cut stems before the flower opens fully to keep the bees from pollinating. Once pollinated, the flower begins to die to make a seed.
- Keep buckets with you that are full of water. The height of the water in the bucket will create pressure on the stem and force water up the stem.
- Remove the leaves from blooming flowers. Force the plant to hydrate the flower and not the leaves. A plant will work to hydrate the leaves first as these are the plant's source of energy and food.
- Allow foliage and floral to hydrate in a cool, dark place away from direct sunlight for a couple of hours.
- When arranging, I like to add Floralife crystal clear granuals or liquid floral preservative.
 - Substitute for Floralife: fill vase with 2/3 water, add a heavy handed dash of vodka to kill future germs, top with lemon lime soda with sugar - no diet drinks. The lemon lime soda contains citric acid, a preservative, and sugar to feed the stems.

RELUCTANT DRINKERS

FLOWERS THAT ARE NOTOTIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO HYDRATE



- Flowers such as Hydrangea, Hellebore, Basil, Mint, Iceland Poppies, Dahlias and Queen Anne's Lace can be reluctant to hydrate and are prone to drooping quickly.
- Ensure that you are picking more mature stems. Young stems can not hydrate on their own. Look for stems that are strong and are starting to show woody details.
- It is key to remove these flowers' leaves and to place in buckets with deep water as mentioned on the page before.
- One quick tip is to dissolve 1 Tablespoon of the pickling powder Alum into your hydrating bucket. Allow flowers to hydrate for several hours before arranging. This trick will bring a wilted hydrangea back to life and can be used multiple times.
- For Dahlias, Basil, and Mint place freshly cut stems in water that has boiled and cooled for 1-2 minutes. Place the stems in the extremely hot water for 5 minutes then place in cool water to hydrate. Mint and Basil will recover from a complete wilt.
- Queen Anne's Lace and Zinnias do not hydrate well if their stem is not strong. Hold the stem 8" down from the bloom and give it a shake. If it is droopy or bends the stem is not ready to be cut.

THE DIRTY GIRLS

FLOWERS WE LOVE, BUT THEY CREATE MURKY, STINKY WATER



- Flowers such as Sunflowers, Rudbeckia (Black Eyed Susans), Yarrow and Zinnias will turn water to a white, cloudy, stinky mix within hours.
- This white water is full of bacteria and can kill the stem and any other plant in the arrangement. It will become a slimy mess.
- Make sure you add a few drops of bleach to the water that holds arrangements with these flowers. While Vodka is mentioned earlier to protect cut flowers from bacteria, these blooms need a stronger antibacterial agent.
- Replacing water daily will prolong the vase life of these flowers. If possible, recut the stems when replacing the water.
- The simplest way to replace the vase water is by holding the flowers gently to the side of your vase and carefully placing your kitchen faucet inside the vase. Run cool water until the vase water runs clear and the old water is flushed.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE

SPECIFIC TIPS & TRICKS TO SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS



Branches (tend to be reluctant drinkers)

The shrubs and trees in your garden can be an ever-changing foundation or focal point in your arrangements. Forsythia, Smokebush, Dogwood, Redbud Magnolia and Viburnum are some of my favorites that I use year round. However, the cream of the crop in blooming branches are Lilacs. They are known for extreme wilt and are very difficult to bring indoors. It is possible though! Here is how we find success. Choose branches that have about 3/4 of the blooms open. Ensure that the branches you are choosing are mature, if not woody, and are strong. Cut the end of stem and with sharp snips vertically cut crosswise. The bottom of the stem will be in four pieces. Pull these stem cuts apart gently and immediately place in cool water in a cool place to hydrate for several hours.

For all other branches follow the same practice of choosing strong and slightly woody branches and make sure you cut up the stem vertically 1". Budded spring branches are also fabulous to force in your home. It takes time, but choose budded branches in your garden, cut (as mentioned above), and place in warm water in a bright sunny window. Over the course of days (or maybe a week) your branches should begin to bloom and even leaf out.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE

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The Daffodil (toxic to vase neighbors)

- **From Home**

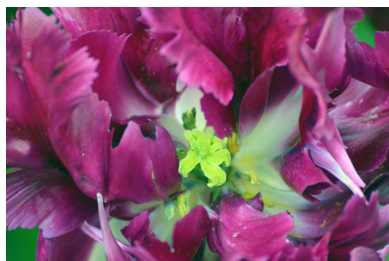
Daffodils bring a pop of needed color as we welcome spring. When placing in a vase with only daffodils there is little to worry about. Cut daffodils and place en mass in a vase. However, if you would like to mix with additional blossoms the sticky sap that leaks from the stems is toxic to other plants and will shorten the life of other flowers. When mixing blooms it is critical to place daffodils in a vase of cool water for 2-3 hours to allow the stems to callous and stop leaking sap. Once the stem is calloused you can add to your arrangement. Do not recut the stem. If necessary to cut, place in cool water to callous again by itself.

- **From Local Grocery Stores**

Often in the spring daffodils are dry stored and available at local grocery stores. These reasonably-priced blooms are easy to condition. Simply make a fresh 1" cut and follow the instructions above for conditioning. Leave in a cool space out of direct sunlight to hydrate before arranging.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE

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The Hellebore (a reluctant drinker)

The Hellebore or Lenten Rose is the first flower of the winter. This tough, cold-hardy bloom pushes through the snow and I am always eager to bring these blossoms into the house. Be patient, early stems will not hydrate and last as a cut flower. Once cut it is critical to remove the leaves and place the stems in vases with deep water which helps to force water up the stem. It can also be helpful to cut the stem on an angle and cut up through the stem 1".

The Tulip (tends to droop and bend)

The tulip is a long lasting bloom when cut prior to opening. Cut when the bud is just starting to show color. Due to the stem's inclination to bend, wrap stems in a cone of paper and hydrate for 2-3 hours. Because tulips are especially sensitive to phototropism, the tendency to grow towards light, they will continue to grow after they are cut. When arranging, nestle tulips deep in your arrangement.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE

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The Peony (full of ants and loses petals quickly)

The peony is everyone's favorite. Choose a blossom while it is still in bud but showing color. Gently squeeze the blossom. You are looking for a soft marshmallow feel. When harvesting, ensure that you leave two sets of leaves per cut on the stem of the plant to maintain food and nutrients for the plant and next year's peonies!

The Garden Rose (loses petals quickly)

The star of the garden for many, the rose is the most delicate flower with one of the shortest vase lives. To prolong vase life, choose a flower that is partially a bud and open by about 1/3. This will allow you to take your blossom before the pollinators start the process of seed making. Once a rose is pollinated, it will immediately drop petals.

Homegrown Vegetables

Adding the whimsy of a vegetable to an arrangement is an unexpected delight. Whether you choose a branch of cherry tomatoes, a stem of tomatillos, or a vine of snap peas each will draw your eye and elevate any design. These items are all simple to add. Choose stems with immature fruit as mature fruit will fall off the vine. Often it is best to remove all leaves as the leaves tend to wilt quickly.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE

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The Hydrangea (a reluctant drinker)

It may not be a surprise with a name centered around "Hydra" that water is a key to the success of the cut hydrangea. After a long summer of waiting the hydrangea comes into its glory only to wilt and die in your vase. There are some simple tricks to end this practice and have success!

1. Hydrangeas are one of the few flowers that drink through their petals. Keep a spray mist bottle of water nearby or use an Evian Brumisateur Facial Spray.
2. When arranging, cut the stem on an extreme angle to increase surface area and cut up the stem vertically 1-2".
3. Place hydrangeas immediately in a large bucket with a tablespoon of the pickling powder alum. Make sure the alum is dissolved and leave for 2-3 hours to hydrate. Once hydrated you can place in fresh cool water with or without the alum. Alum may cloud your water if using a glass vase.
4. Keep all cut flowers out of direct sunlight, but this is especially true for Hydrangeas! No sunny windows. Transpiration will take that water right out of the petals.
5. If your hydrangea wilts, give it a bath! Submerge the entire stem, bloom and all in cool water for a few hours. This will perk up the stem as well as the flowers - leaving you with a fresh bloom again. Gently shake out the water, recut the stem vertically.

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