Friday’s Feature
By
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Keep Valentine flowers fresh longer

Fresh flowers are a popular gift on holidays and with good reason. Ninety-two percent of American women can remember the last time they were given flowers, and fresh flowers have an immediate positive impact on happiness.

Flowers are always an appropriate gift, but with so many florists, how do you choose one that’s right for you?

Look for a floral shop that offers the product mix, level of service and design style that fit your needs. Word of mouth is often the best resource when looking for a florist. An outstanding florist will have a good reputation in your community.

Select a florist who’ll get to know you, keep track of your favorite flowers, and send reminders of upcoming special occasions. Find one with convenient hours and a guarantee of satisfaction.

Look for artistry in the florist’s designs and presentation. A great shop carries a complete selection of different, high-quality flowers. It should also provide floral food with purchases and offer instructions for proper care.

For those receiving fresh flowers this Valentine’s Day, increase the lifespan of your beautiful flowers by following these easy steps.

- Chose flowers whose blooms have not yet fully opened. Roses, for example, should only be about one-third fully opened when purchased from a florist. The blooms should be bright in color, not faded, and look upright and fresh, not wilted.
- Handle your flowers carefully—they are delicate and living plants.
- Flowers must remain in water at all times. Cut the stems of boxed flowers, such as roses or carnations, under water. This prevents air from plugging the moisture-conducting tubes in the stems. Cut flowers that have been out of water more than a few minutes should have a small portion of the lower stem cut off so that water will move up freely when it is returned to water.
- Strip away the bottom leaves that would be below the water level. As leaves decay, they cause bacteria to grow in the water. Bacterial growth inside stems is the prime reason that fresh flowers
wilt.

- A good homemade keeping solution is ½ cup white sugar and one teaspoon of bleach or vinegar to one gallon water at room temperature or warmer. The sugar supplies carbohydrates to the flower, since roots and leaves (which normally supply carbohydrates to flowers through photosynthesis) have been removed. The bleach suppresses bacterial growth. If vinegar is used, it suppresses bacterial growth by providing an unfriendly, acid pH.

- There are many good commercial preservative solutions available, and their use will save you the time of mixing a homemade solution. When using a commercial product, be sure to follow the directions on the floral preservative packet--most packets are for either one pint or one quart of water.

- If your vase solution begins to become cloudy, re-cut the stems and place into new solution.

- Check the water level of the container or vase daily and add water plus preservative when needed.

- Florists keep their display arrangements in a cooler for good reason. Flowers last much longer at cooler temperatures than at room temperature. Keep your cut flowers out of the hot sun and away from heat sources, and they'll reward you with longer life.

- Keep flowers away from cigarette smoke and ripening fruit, because they contain ethylene gas, which is harmful to flowers.

A good florist and proper care of fresh flowers can make any occasion a memorable one.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

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