

HOW TO PROLONG THE LIFE OF CUT FLOWERS

Now we have put Valentine's Day and Mothering Sunday behind us for another year, we look forward to Easter with the traditional spring flowers and to the glorious May garden flowers. As you will probably be bringing flowers into the house at this time of year I hope the following information will help you to prolong their life and so give you more pleasure.

Buy good quality flowers that have not been exposed to traffic-fumes or dust. Also flowers that are sitting near fresh vegetables have a shortened vase life as they have been exposed to ethylene gas – tomatoes in particular give off a great deal of this. Also remember not to place your finished arrangement near heating or fresh fruit and vegetables in your home.

On receipt of your flowers cut the stems and get them drinking as quickly as possible. Meanwhile prepare your chosen vase. Make sure that it has been sterilized since holding the previous flowers, this is most important. If you are using oasis always use a new block as a used one will carry the same bacteria as the water in a week old vase, usually pretty green and smelly if the water hasn't been changed. Put enough water in your vase to allow the stems to drink. There is no need to fill it up. If using oasis, shape it and drop it into a container of water, when it sinks to the bottom it is ready for use and will not need any more water pouring over it. Now add flower food. This has been rigorously tested and is better than lemonade or an aspirin.

Now you are ready to arrange your flowers. Remove any foliage that would be below water level and cut the stems on a slant to prevent them from plugging against the bottom of the container. If using a member of the dianthus family i.e. carnation, sweet william, gypsophila, cut between the nodes, if you break on the node they cannot drink. If using flowers from the narcissus family, i.e. daffodil, solidors, paper whites etc., leave these flowers in water for twentyfour hours before mixing them with other flowers. Narcissus have a poisonous sap which will kill the other flowers if this treatment is not given. Place your completed arrangement in a cool but draught-free place out of direct sunlight.

Now your main concern is to regularly change, not top up, the water, re-cut stems and remove any decaying foliage each time. Tulips and muscari carry on growing after they have been cut which is why they will suddenly appear to faint over the vase edge as their heads get too heavy for their stems. Regular cutting will keep them upright. Roses may suddenly droop, this is because they are susceptible to air locks. Re-cut the stem, protect the heads and stand in a little boiling water. You will see the air bubbles popping out and the rose should lift its head. Never smash the ends of the stem, it was a well used method but in fact all it does is destroy the vascular system and shorten the life-span of the flower.

I hope you have found this information interesting. Enjoy your Easter flowers.

Heather of "Heather's Flowers".