



Back to the Basics Conditioning Plant Materials

Maximize water absorption and water maintenance

- For garden flowers: Cut on angle early AM or near sunset and as long as possible
- Bring a bucket of clean water to immediately place stems to prevent wilting
- Place flowers in a cool place away from a sunny window and drafts. Leave as long as possible or overnight.
- Split ends of woody-stemmed flowers or branches
- Re-cut stems under water to remove air bubbles before placing in arrangements

Bacteria is not your friend

- Make sure buckets, containers and hasami are clean—use alcohol wipes on blades
- Use soap or liquid bleach and water to clean containers
- Remove all leaves that will be underwater
- To retard growth of bacteria use one teaspoon per quart of water
 - Vodka or grain alcohol or
 - Bleach or
 - Sugar
- Add water to arrangements daily
- If water is cloudy add a little liquid bleach with new water

Flowers from the Garden or Commercial Source

- Cut under water to remove air bubbles
- Keep in a cool place out of drafts
- Opening Tip: Add ice to water if you want to retard opening
- Rose Tip: When arranging, take petals off outside so the blossom is perfect

Cut flowers need three ingredients

- Carbohydrates for cell metabolism
- Biocides to combat bacteria and maintain plant health
- Acidifiers to adjust the pH of water which facilitates water uptake

Commercial Flower Foods

- Specific ingredients vary but most contain the three basic ingredients above
- Some may also include chemicals to assure the absorption of food and water
- Lots of choices including powders, packets and liquids

Homemade Flower Foods Can Be as Effective as Commercial

- Recipes using 1 quart of water and mixing until dissolved
 - Recipe #1 (traditional and has all basics) add
 - 1 teaspoon vodka or grain alcohol (not rubbing alcohol) (Acidifier)
 - 1 teaspoon bleach (biocide)
 - 1 tablespoon sugar (carbohydrate)
 - Recipe #2 (no biocide and strong) add
 - Two tablespoons sugar (carbohydrate)
 - One tablespoon vinegar (acidifier)
 - One tablespoon citric acid or lemon juice (acidifier)

- Recipe #3 (conservative and has all basics) add
 - 1 teaspoon sugar (carbohydrate)
 - 1 teaspoon household bleach (biocide)
 - 2 teaspoons lemon/lime juice (or 1 teaspoon citric acid and 1 teaspoon white vinegar) (acidifier)

Quick Dip

- Ready-to-use treatment
- Helps flowers hydrate by improving ability to absorb solutions
- Designed to reduce droopy stems and bent necks
- Can be used with all types of flowers

Crowning Glory, FloraLife or Hawaiian Floral Mist spray

- Helps seal the surface of the blossoms and leaves
- Slows the transpiration and water loss
- Spray a fine mist on your arrangement--allow to dry at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes

Alum

- Alum (aluminum potassium sulfate)
 - white powder
 - helps keep flowers fresh longer
 - especially those with woody stems like hydrangeas and roses
- Helps flowers draw more water and stay open, which can prevent wilting
- Find alum powder in the spice section of most grocery stores or order online

Common Techniques in Conditioning to Increase Water Uptake

- Hammering woody stems
- Splitting Stems
- Scraping Bark off
- Searing Stems

Savvy Shopper Tips

- Roses: firm to touch -- ok to buy -- but if soft or squishy, do not buy
 - Before arranging, remove outside petals so blossom is at its best
- Gerbera Daisies: look where blossom attaches to stem -- should be nice and fat like the bottom of the stem
- Condition of flowers you purchase should be hard, fresh and perky
- Avoid buying flowers with brown spots or yellow foliage
- Flowers kept outside for purchase are vulnerable to wind damage which can shorten life
- Avoid flowers with translucent or withered petals
- Most flowers that do not show any color are unlikely to open

Member Showcase

- Date: April 3, 2025
- Calling all teachers to encourage and mentor their students to exhibit
- Alison will take formal photos of each design to go on website
- Let IOR know you plan to exhibit so we can plan the number of tables