

# Hints For The Home



## How To Keep Your Cut Flowers Fresher Longer

(NAPSA)—Fresh-cut flowers brighten the home, help celebrate important occasions and make entertaining simply beautiful.

If only they would last longer.

Surprisingly, with a few simple tips you can double or even triple the amount of time to enjoy your flowers, according to the California Cut Flower Commission.

First, learn to pick the freshest flowers. Unless you need them all open at the time of purchase, buy flowers with closed buds so they will last longer.

Recut the stems when you get home. The stems seal shut very quickly, so cut about one inch off the end—that will allow water to penetrate and move to the bloom. When flowers are taken in and out of water, bacteria can enter the stem before it seals shut, so re-cutting will also help eliminate bacteria which are already present.

Be sure to cut stems at a 45 degree angle, which creates more surface area to absorb the water. Make sure to use a sharp knife or scissors as dull ones will squeeze the plant cells shut and shorten the flower's life. Ideally, cut them under water so an air bubble doesn't enter the stem while you are cutting and block the water.

Your vase should be clean, too.



### **Re-cut flower stems for longest vase life.**

If there is debris from the last time you used it, it will cause bacteria to grow.

Next, remove all foliage that will be below the waterline. As the foliage decays in the water, it creates bacteria which harms the flower and causes that “icky, rotting” smell. Be careful doing it, though. If you damage the outer plant cells, juices will be released that will create more bacteria growth.

Floral food really works, say the experts. Floral food is added to the water at the growers' nursery and all along the line of distribution. It has sugars, which feed the flower and an antiseptic quality that reduces bacteria.

Don't listen to old wives' tales about adding aspirin or bleach to the water. Too much can harm the flowers.

You can find flower food at your local florist. It's inexpensive, so stock up and have it on hand when you need it. Floral foods are professionally formulated, so make sure to mix them with water according to the directions on the package.

Most people tend to fill their vases pretty full, but that's not necessary and can even be harmful. The more the stem is in the water, the more chance bacteria has to destroy the tissue. Add or replace water (with floral food) every other day or so, depending on how much the flowers are drinking.

Finally, flowers like to be cool. Don't put them in a sunny window or on top of your television. Keep them in indirect light for the longest vase life.

As your flowers age, pluck off withered blooms or discard entire stems. You may also want to recut and move them to a smaller vase as their numbers “shrink.”

Then all you have to do is sit back and enjoy.

For more tips on how to keep your cut flowers fresher longer, visit the CCFC Web site at [www.ccfc.org](http://www.ccfc.org).