

Delaware State University
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION PROGRAM**

Choosing, Cutting and Caring for your Fresh Cut Flowers

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Choosing the Right Flower

When you look down a row of flowers, it may appear that all of the blooms are ready for cutting and adding to a bouquet. However, a closer look will reveal that not all blooms are at their peak of perfection. Try to select the flowering stem that looks like it is a newly opened flower. A new flower bloom will not have been worked-on by many pollinating insects that visit gardens. Once bees and other pollinators start pollinating flowers, the petals begin to fade and will have markings where the insects have been.

Cutting Your Fresh Flowers

The best time to cut flowers is in the early morning or as evening begins to cool. At these times, it is easy to identify which of the blooms are brand new. Try to avoid cutting flowers in the heat of mid-day as flowers will have a build-up of field heat within the bunches.

Use very sharp scissors, a knife or pruning shears. Don't hurry; you may end up cutting yourself. Furthermore, to prevent children from injury, don't let them do the cutting or handle cutting utensils.

Carry a pail or bucket of fresh, tepid water with floral preservative added for the freshly cut flowers. Select flowers with long stems. Be sure to cut the flower stems two to three inches longer than needed, as you will re-cut them when placing in an arrangement. As you cut them, place the newly cut stems in the water immediately. The cut should be straight or at an angle. Remember, cut flowers are fragile; try not to squeeze and/or crush stems (damaging the cells inside the stem), so that they will be able to take up water. If possible, keep the bucket out of direct sunlight. Don't overfill the bucket with too many bunches, it is best to have several buckets with less flowers.

<i>Cut when flower head is fully expanded or in full bloom</i>	Achillea (Yarrow)	Daisies
	Black-eyed Susans	Hydrangeas
	Butterfly Bush	Marigolds
	Calendulas	Snapdragons
	Chrysanthemums	Sunflowers
	Coreopsis	Zinnias
<i>Cut when flowers are not opened, but show color</i>	Celosia	
	Salvia	
	Scabiosa	
<i>Cut when flowers are in bud</i>	Peonies	Iris
	Gladiolus	Roses
<i>Cut when flowers are half opened</i>	Asters	
	Carnations	
<i>Cut multi-stemmed flowers when less than one-third of their flowers are fully opened</i>	Coral Bell	
	Delphiniums	
	Statice	



Caring for Your Fresh Cut Flowers

If you are not selling or using them right away, leave your fresh cut flowers in a dark, cool location and in the water for several hours to allow maximum water uptake.

When creating an arrangement, use clean containers that are free of bacteria and mold from previous arrangements. Fill with warm water. Do not use hard or treated water, instead use bottled water. Should you add anything to the water to prolong plant life? Some resources suggest adding a teaspoon of liquid laundry bleach to one quart of water, or add a commercial floral preservative available at most florist or plant nurseries.

Re-cut your flower stems removing about one-inch of stem. Carefully strip off any foliage that will be below the water line. Again, be careful not to crush the stem.

Every few days you may want to change the water, clean the vase, remove another inch from the stem and put the bouquet back in the vase.

Summer bouquets of fresh, brightly colored flowers placed throughout the home creates beauty and cheerfulness for all to enjoy.

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