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Proper Care of Cut Flowers – Care of House and Garden Plants

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

Home and Family Series

December 1966

2 pages

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Care of House and Garden Plants

Proper Care of Cut Flowers

Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University



Good habits in the care and handling of cut flowers will result in long life of the flowers. If they do not live their normal period in the home, then all the time spent growing them or money spent to buy them will be lost.

Care of home grown flowers:

1. Cut your garden flowers early in the morning or late evening. At this time they are crisp and turgid with water.
2. Use a sharp knife or shears. Avoid using scissors because they squeeze the ends together and inhibit water uptake.
3. Take a bucket of warm water (110°F) with you when cutting garden flowers. Place the flowers in the water immediately after cutting.
4. The flowers should be kept in the water approximately two hours.
5. After the two hours in warm water, arrange your flowers.
6. If the flowers cannot be put into an arrangement following the water treatment, then place them in warm water in the lower half of the refrigerator with plastic over the top of them until you have time to make them into an arrangement.
7. Be sure to select a clean and suitable container for your arrangement. Always wash each container before placing flowers in it. Bacterial growths which have remained in uncleaned containers soon multiply and tend to crowd the water-conducting tubes of the flowers. These growths cause flowers to wilt.
8. Add a commercial flower preservative to the water if possible (your florist will have a number of different kinds for sale). These preservatives are compounds of sugar, acids that prevent bacterial growth, and a fungicide.

9. Avoid setting your arrangements near drafts, radiators, direct sun, or electric lights. Under these conditions, the flowers transpire faster than they can absorb water and wilting occurs.
10. The arrangement will last longer if placed in a cool spot at night. Remember - the cooler the temperature the less the flowers transpire - the longer they will last.

Flowers bought from florists:

1. Cut 1/2" to 1" of stems of cut flowers purchased from florist.
2. Place flowers in warm water (110°F) immediately after cutting.
3. Follow instructions from #4 through #10 on the care of home grown cut flowers.