

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



CARE OF FRESH FLOWERS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Best wishes for a blooming holiday season! It's time to fill each room in your house with fresh flowers. Bought from a florist, farmer's market or plant farm, a fresh arrangement lasts longer with extra care. For example, chrysanthemum last up to two weeks, carnations about one and roses about five days.

Select only roses and carnations that are not more than half open. The tighter the rose, the longer it will last. A warm room at 70 degrees or higher causes tulips, daffodils and iris to open too quickly. Buy them tightly closed as well. Gladiolus last longer if the top bud is snapped off. Removing the bud promoted flowering up and down the spike.

After arriving home with your fresh flowers fill a vase

with water at room temperature. Before adding your flowers add a commercially available flower preservative to the water. Often, these preservatives are provided with a fresh flower from a florist. Look for flower preservatives at craft stores or flower shops.

Remove the lower foliage from all flower stems. Foliage left in water speeds up stem decay and causes a foul odor as well. Recut the flower stems (about 1/2 inch) using a very sharp shears or knife. Put the freshly cut stems immediately in water. To keep roses fresh, recut the stems every other day.

Keep your flower display out of the direct sunlight. Keep them in the coolest rooms away from radiators. Heat from a television can shorten flower life. To keep flowers crisp, place your flowers in your coolest room at night or in the refrigerator. Add water daily to your flower arrangements.

When purchasing fresh flow-

ers, avoid flowers with petals blemished by soil or water. The flowers' colors should be bright and clear. The foliage should look fresh with a bright shade of green. Stems should be straight and strong enough to support the flower bud.

To add variety to your fresh arrangement be creative and try something new. Here's several ideas. Add blue or purple pastel colors to your arrangements using a fragrant lavender spike *Lavendula angustifolia*, blazing star, *latris spicata*, glove thistle, *echinopsritro*, or delphinium, *Delphinium species*. Delphiniums produce tall stems of blue, purple, white and pink. Heliotrope flowers are purple

with a pleasing vanilla scent.

An endless assortment of colored carnations make holiday flower arranging easy. Mix with filler plants like baby's breath, small daisies or fluffy asters. The best filler colors are pale pink, blues and yellows. White fillers are best when making arrangements combining cool and warm color.

Try a fun arrangement using many bold colors, sizes and shapes of flowers. Sprigs of fragrant herbs or mints add an attractive scent to a bouquet. Or, use oregano or basil.

All questions concerning this article can be directed to Tom Becker, 840-7408, at Penn State Cooperative Extension, York County.



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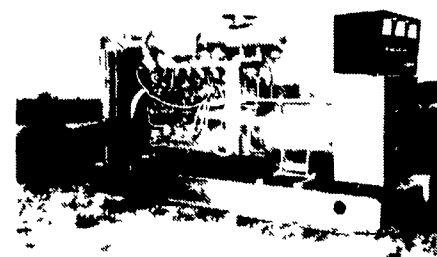
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