

## Garden to Vase: Cut Flowers and Foliage from your Garden

Many flowers and leaves you grow can be great in a vase and will be longer lasting, with more unique blossoms than any florist's arrangement. Here's how to cut, gather and treat these materials for the freshest look and longest life.

### I. The idea is to *keep them alive*

- A. Cut early in A.M., or in evening.
- B. Don't cut material that is not full of water
  - 1. Wilted flowers are tough to revive and will not keep as long
  - 2. Avoid the heat of midday that can cause flowers to wilt quickly after cutting
- C. Cut buds and young flowers
  - 1. Most plants will continue to grow and open in the arrangement
- D. Use a sharp knife or cutter. Avoid bruising the stem.
  - 1. Bruised stems don't absorb water as well, and absorbing water is the key.
  - 2. Bruised stems more likely to become fungus infected.

### II. Treating different stems differently

- A. Be aware of hollow, woody, and milky stems
  - Treat them so they can take up water in the arrangement.

Hollow:      prick an air hole  
                  turn upside down and fill  
                  hold at angle under water so water runs into the stem  
                  re-cut the stem while under water

Woody:        hammer to soften it  
                  hold in boiling water for a short time  
                  peel bottom two inches

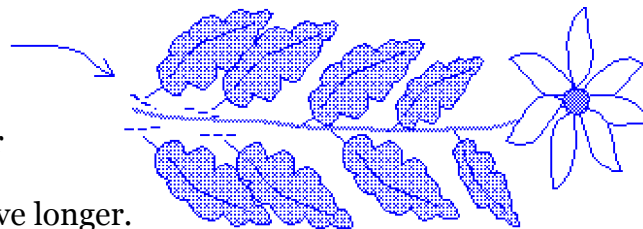
Milky:         singe

<u>Hollow stems</u>	<u>Woody stems</u>	<u>Milky-juice</u>	<u>No spec. treatment</u>
Dahlias	Lilacs	Poppies ( <i>Papaver</i> )	Daisies
Delphiniums	Mums	Milkweeds ( <i>Asclepias</i> )	Lily-of-the-Valley
Bells-of-Ireland ( <i>Molucella laevis</i> )	<i>Forsythia</i>	Spurge ( <i>Euphorbia</i> spp.)	Irises
Daffodils ( <i>Narcissus</i> )	Quince ( <i>Chaenomeles</i> spp.)	Dandelions ( <i>Taraxacum</i> )	Many tulips

### III. About foliage

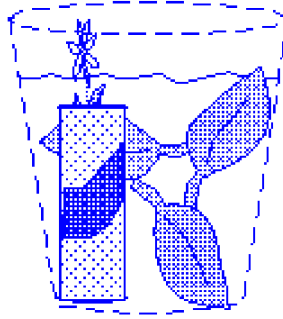
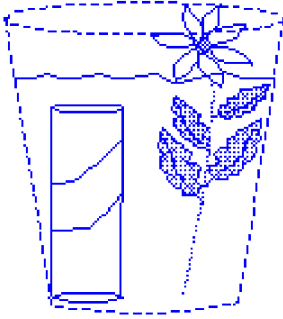
- A. Remove foliage that will be submerged.
  - 1. Leaves and flowers decay under water, taking vital oxygen out of the water
  - 2. Decaying material also fouls the water
- B. Removing extra leaves helps the plant stay alive longer.
  - Every leaf needs water, yet the cut stem can absorb only so much.
  - If the demand is too great for the stem, it will sacrifice the top -- the flower!

Remove



### IV. Conditioning

- A. Get flowers into deep water as soon as possible after cutting.
  - 1. Most flowers should soak "up to their necks" in tepid water.
  - 2. Soak 3-4 hours, minimum, for flowers to be completely full of water ("turgid").



3. Many foliage plants can be submerged and crisped, like lettuce.
4. Some stems need support in the soaking bucket.
5. Water temperature can speed up or slow down bloom.
6. Hairy or woolly leaves get waterlogged underwater, need special handling.

## V. Storing cut flowers

A. Keep cut flowers cool and dark

- ...unless you want them to grow more quickly, or turn to the light:

In a shallow pan of water, a flower laid on its side, up to its neck, will turn to the light. This can create interesting pieces for arrangements, but if you don't expect it, it can ruin the look you intended.



## Forcing Spring-Blooming Shrubs into Flower.

**Step 1:** Cut the branches after the plant has had at least 6 weeks of cold weather (usually after Christmas).

**Step 2:** Hammer or peel the ends of the branches. Put them in a bucket of deep warm water for a whole day.

**Step 3:** Pour off the deep water and put about 2" of lukewarm water in the bottom of the bucket. Change this water every day.

**Step 4:** Keep the branches warm and in sunlight (as bright a light as possible) until buds begin to open. Flowers usually open in 8 to 14 days but don't be surprised by immediate bloom in March or April, since the later in winter you cut, the more quickly some will bloom.

**Plants to force:** *Forsythia*, maple, cherry, *Magnolia*, early *Spiraea*, quince, pussywillow, birch, clove currant and other shrubs and trees whose flowers open in the spring before the leaves begin to grow.