

HOW TO PREPARE CUT FLOWERS:

Cut material needs to be “conditioned” to provide the longest life. This allows maximum water uptake and results in fresher looking and longer lasting bouquets and arrangements. As with most things in life, some require special treatment while others do just fine with simple treatment.

Simple Conditioning:

1. Cut all material in the cool of the day
2. Use sharp clean clippers
3. All containers must be “drinking water clean”
4. Remove unnecessary foliage, any foliage below the water-line will decay, promote bacterial growth and smell foul
5. Recut stems underwater on the diagonal, removing about 1" (2.5 cm) to allow stems to drink. Cut noded stems between nodes
6. Place recut stems in 6" (15cm) deep tepid water overnight or for several hours in cool draught-free area
7. Use a commercial floral preservative or half water/half clear carbonated beverage (like 7up or Sprite) or add 1 t. sugar and 1 t. chlorine bleach to a litre of water

Special Conditioning:

There are 5 methods of “special” conditioning. A chart follows, indicating which type of conditioning suits which plants; any further instructions will be noted; if 2 methods works, that will be noted. Plants that require a little extra are listed at the end of the chart.

Method I Hottest tap water available

After recutting stems under water, place cut stem in hottest tap water to a depth of about 6" (15 cm); allow to cool. (Mostly ‘shrubby’ stems)

Method II Boiling water

After recutting stems underwater, place cut stem end in 2" (5cm) of boiling water for 1 minute. Protect flower head with towelling. Top up with tepid water and leave to cool. If stem end goes soft, just trim off before placing in arrangement.

Method III Seared in a flame

After recutting stems underwater, sear the stem end in a flame and condition in warm water for several hours.

Method IV Splitting the stem

After recutting the stem underwater, split stem end several times, put in hot tap water and allow to cool several hours or overnight. Immature foliage does not condition well so cut older wood; may take up to 48 hours to condition.

Special conditioning (cont'd)

Method V Filling stem and reinforcing

After recutting stem underwater, hollow stems need to be filled with water using a syringe or small funnel; plug end with your finger after filling and place in 6" (15 cm) deep tepid water. No one knows how many hours to keep finger on end of stem. Some large stems may also require reinforcing with a bamboo skewer.

Note If using a floral foam (Oasis), be sure to follow manufacturer's directions about "filling", i.e. float foam in water and allow it to take up water on its own; don't "hold underwater to speed things up".

PLANT NAME	Simple conditioning	Hottest tap water	Boiling water	Flame seared	Split stem	Filled stem	Special instructions re: time and water temperature
Achillea (yarrow)	●						
Aconitum Napellus (monkshood)				●			
Agapanthus					●		
Ageratum			●	●			
Alchemilla Mollis (Lady's Mantle)	●						cool water
Althea (Hollyhock)				●			
Alyssum Lobularia, annual (sweet)	●						
Alyssum Saxatilis (basket of gold)				●			
Amaranthus			●				
Amaryllis						●	cool water
Anchusa (Bugloss)			●				30 seconds, cool water
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon)	●						cool water
Anemone			●	●			cool water, no "oasis"
Anthemis Tinctoria (Marguerite)					●		warm water
Artemesia			●				
Asclepias (Milkweed)				●			

PLANT NAME	Simple conditioning	Hottest tap water	Boiling water	Flame seared	Split stem	Filled stem	Special instructions re: time and water temperature
Astilbe					●		
Aquilegia (Columbine)				●			warm water
Azalea					●		
Baptisia (False Indigo)			●	●			
Begonia (semperflorens & rieger)					●		cool water
Bulb flowers (see <i>Lilium</i> , <i>narcissus</i> , <i>tulip</i>)	●						cool water
Calendula			●				
Callistephus chinensis (Asters)			●				warm water
Canna flowers			●				2 minutes, cool water
Campanula (Canterbury Bells)				●			warm water
Celastrus (Bittersweet)	●						
Celosia (plumed or crested)			●	●			
Centaurea (Bachelor's button & Cornflower)			●				warm water
Clematis				●			
Cleome (Spider flower)					●		overnight
Coleus			●				cool water
Coreopsis	●						overnight
Cosmos	●						
Crocsmia (Montbretia)	●						shallow water (2"/5cm)
Dahlia			●	●			warm water, overnight
Daucus (Queen Anne's Lace)			●				2 minutes, warm water
Delphinium - Larkspur	●					●	warm water warm water, overnight

PLANT NAME	Simple conditioning	Hottest tap water	Boiling water	Flame seared	Split stem	Filled stem	Special instructions re: time and water temperature
Dianthus - Carnation - Sweet William	●		●				warm water warm water, overnight
Dictamnus (Gas Plant)	●						
Dicentra (Bleeding Heart)				●	●		split and sear; cool water
Digitalis (Floxglove)				●			warm water
Doronconium (Leopardsbane)				●			warm water
Echinops (Globe Thistle)					●		
Euphorbia (Spurge)				●			cool water
Evergreens	●						rinse well in tepid water
Fuchsia				●	●		split and sear
Gaillardia (Blanket flowers)				●			
Geranium							needs no conditioning
Gerbera (Transvaal Daisy)			●	●			shallow water
Geum			●				
Godetia	●						
Gypsophilia (Baby's Breath)	●						
Helianthus (Sunflower)			●				2 minutes, overnight
Heliotrope (use short stems)				●			warm water
Heuchera (Coral Bells)			●	●			overnight
Hydrangea				●			warm water
Ipomoea (Morning Glory)			●	●			split & dip in boiling water, overnight
Kniphofia Tritoma (Red Hot Poker)					●		overnight
Lantana					●		hot water
Lathyrus odoratus (Sweet Pea)			●				30 seconds, warm water

PLANT NAME	Simple conditioning	Hottest tap water	Boiling water	Flame seared	Split stem	Filled stem	Special instructions re: time and water temperature
Liatriis (Blazing Star)				●			
Limonium (Statice, See Lavender)	●						
Lupine			●				dip boiling, let cool then fill
Lychnis Viscaria (Maltese Cross)	●						overnight
Lysimachia (Yellow Loosestrife)			●				2 minutes, overnight
Lythrum	●						
Mallow (Lavatera, Sildalcea)					●		overnight
Mathiola (Stocks)	●						cool, overnight
Mertensia (Virginia Bluebells)				●	●		split and sear; warm water
Michaelmas Daisy			●	●			warm water
Molucella Laevis (Bells of Ireland)					●		warm water
Monarda (Beebalm)			●				overnight
Myosotis (Forget-me-not)			●	●			warm water
Nasturtium	●						warm water, overnight
Nicotiana	●						warm water
Nigella (Love-in-a-mist)	●						
Oenothera (Evening Primrose)				●			overnight
Ornithogalum	●						cool water
Pansy	●						don't use "oasis"
Papaver (Poppy)				●			overnight
Penstemon				●			overnight
Phlox					●		overnight
Physalis (Chinese lanterns)			●				overnight
Physostegia (Obedience)			●				

PLANT NAME	Simple conditioning	Hottest tap water	Boiling water	Flame seared	Split stem	Filled stem	Special instructions re: time and water temperature
Platycodon (Balloon or Bell Flower)				●			overnight
Primula (Primrose)				●			
Pyrethrum (Painted Daisy)				●			warm water
Ricinus (Castor Beans)			●				cool water
Rudbeckia			●				2 minutes, overnight
Salpiglossis			●				warm water
Salvia (Sages)			●				2 minutes, hot water
Scabiosa (Pincushion flower)				●			
Sedum			●	●			warm water
Tagetes (Marigold)	●						overnight
Tithonia (Mexican Daisy)				●			warm water
Trollius (Globe flower)				●			cool water
Verbascum (Mullein)				●			warm water
Verbena	●						
Veronica (Speedwell)				●			warm water
Wildflowers (Roadside)		●					deep 6" (15 cm)
Woody stems					●		hottest tap water
Zinnia			●				warm water

Finally, the following plants require a little extra:

Begonia

Tuberous dip blossom in cold water for a few minutes, remove and let excess drain. Place on moist cotton, keep cool and mist.

Fibrous leaves, sear or dip in boiling water one minute then submerge in cool water one to two hours. Dry and arrange floating in water.

. . . require a little extra (cont'd)

- Brassica* (Flowering cabbage/Kale)
Loosen leaves. Immerse in cool water several hours or place in plastic bag with a little water and refrigerate overnight.
- Caladium* leaves - dip stem end in boiling water 1 minute then submerge in cool water for 2 - 4 hours.
- Canna* leaves - dip stem end in boiling water then submerge in cool water 24 hours.
- Chrysanthemum* do not cut, break stems, dip in boiling water and condition in deep water. Use bleach or floral preservative to stop bacterial growth.
- Hosta* leaves - submerge overnight.
- Iris* to help buds open, tap bud casing to loosen; prick through stem with a needle near blossom to prevent air bubbles. Condition overnight in tepid water and arrange in shallow water.
- Lilium* after recutting stem, dip in boiling water 1 minute. Condition in tepid water. Remove anthers to stop pollen staining.
- Narcissus* (Daffodils)
Recut and rinse to remove sap. This sap will clog other stems if not removed. Condition in cool water with just narcissus. They may then be used in mixed arrangements if not recut.
- Paeonia* (Peony)
Remove unnecessary foliage and side shoots and recut underwater. Sear stem ends and condition in warm water overnight. To keep for 2 to 3 weeks, cut long stems, place in plastic bags and refrigerate. When ready to use, condition as above.
- Ricinus* (Castor Beans)
Leaves - dip leaf stem end in boiling water then submerge whole leaf in cool water for several hours.
- Roses* recut stems on an angle underwater. Dip in boiling water 2 minutes; top up with cool water and leave overnight. Remove thorns under the waterline; use floral preservative or clear carbonated beverage and water in half-half mix.
- Syringa* (Lilac)
Leave only 2 leaves near flower head; split stem end then immerse flower heads in cool water. Shake off excess water and place stems in deep hottest tap water (& up to leave and flowers) for several hours or overnight. Arrange in deep water.
- Tulips* prick stem just under flower head to remove air bubbles; remove white part of

stem. For straight stems, wrap in newspaper and place upright in cool water overnight. Arrange in shallow water. A few drops of liquid starch will help keep stems straight.

Typha (Cat tails)

To prevent heads from blasting, pick only young ones and spray heads with clear urethane or shellac.

Zantedeschia (Calla or Arum lilies)

Condition in cool water in cool place. Wrap stems with newspaper to keep straight, bind ends with scotch tape to keep from curling. Submerge leaves in cool water 24 hours.