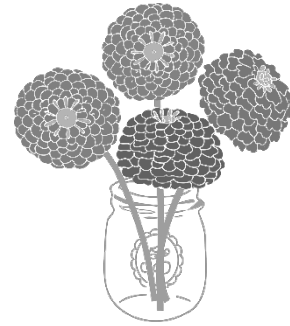


# CUT FLOWER TIPS



## Resources:

*Floret Farm's Cut Flower Garden*, Erin Benzakein, ©2017 Chronicle Books;

*Flower Gardening 1-2-3*, Meredith Books ©2002;

*The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*, Tracy DiSabato-Aust, Timber Press © 2006;

1. What to look for in a cut flower: Attractive in a vase, Strong stem, Long vase life, Plays well with others, Multiple stems or “cut-and-come again”, Can be grown densely
2. Where to place plants for cutting? A designated area just for flowers & foliage to be cut, interspersed throughout the gardens, include all types of plants (annuals, bulbs, perennials, vegetables, vines, shrubs), Ideally at least 6 hours of sunshine and close to a water source, aim for half foliage or filler plants; the other half for showy ones that bloom in different seasons
3. Basic Tasks: Watering, Fertilize, Deadheading, Pinching, Netting, Staking, Trellising, Harvesting
4. When and How to Cut Stems: Cut flower stems at an angle to prevent the stem resting on the bottom of the vase and sealing itself over. Angular cuts also create a larger surface area for water uptake, Woody stems can be stripped or hammered to allow for more water uptake. Cut Hydrangea stems under water to avoid air bubbles, Strip any foliage from stems that would sit below water level in a vase as these will simply decay, becoming slimy and smelly.
5. Vase Tricks: Use a clean vase as bacteria can survive in dirty vases and reduce the life of your cut flowers, Use tepid water in your vases. Cold water has a higher oxygen content, which can cause air bubbles to form in the stems of your flowers, blocking their water uptake. Spring bulbs such as tulips and daffodils are the exception to this rule as they prefer to be placed in cold water, Position your vase carefully. The life of your cut flowers will be reduced if they are placed close to heat, drafts or direct sunlight, Keep cut flowers away from fruit bowls as fruit produces ethylene which causes cut flowers to die prematurely, Remove any dead or fading blooms to prevent bacteria damaging the healthy flowers, Change the water every few days, refreshing any flower feed and preservatives at the same time.

6. Examples of Vase Life: Sweet pea (3-7 days), Lily (8-10 days), Sunflower (7-10 days), Tulip (Up to 7 days), Gladiolus (7-10 days), Roses (4-7 days), Dianthus (14-21 days), Peonies (5-7 days), Gypsophila (Up to 7 days), Zinnia (7-10 days)

7. Flower Preservative Recipe

2 tablespoons fresh lemon or lime juice.

1 tablespoon sugar.

1/2 teaspoon household chlorine bleach.

1-quart warm water

*Sugar for nutrition, bleach to keep the water clear of bacteria, and citric acid to gently acidify the water.*

11. Other Preservative Techniques

- Dry flower heads by stripping leaves and hanging upside down out of direct light in a dry location
- Place stems of fresh flowers or branches in a mixture of two parts lukewarm water to one part glycerin
- Allow flowers or seed heads to dry naturally in flower bed

### Plant Profiles - Spring

**Daffodils:** Harvest before the flowers fully open, Daffodils have a sap that is toxic to other flowers, keep them separate or condition them by allowing the sap to flow in cold water and stems callus over for 2-3 hours (don't recut)

**Tulips:** Harvest when still in bud with a hint of color, Tulips will bend and curve after harvest; put in a funnel of paper to stand upright in water for a few hours, Fresh picked stems will elongate for a few days

**Lilacs:** Pick flowers when cool with a bucket of cool water, Flowers open very little after harvest so pick when 3/4s of the bloom cluster is open, immediately after harvest transfer to a cool space, remove most of the leaves, Cut the stem ends and slice vertically 2-3 inches and twist backwards to open up the stem, plunge immediately into cool water, Leave in a cool, dark room to rehydrate for a few hours

**Peonies:** Need staking or netting to maintain upright stems, Harvest at any time but will last longest when picked in bud (soft marshmallow stage), Can be cut in bud and stored for 2-3 weeks in a plastic bag bunched (laying down) with a paper towel in the fridge; rehydrate by cutting stem and place in warm water with flower preservative

**Sweet William (Dianthus):** Harvest when just a few flowers are open; this prevents the delicate blossoms from damage, Long vase life, Best grown from seed – Sweet William is grown as a biennial, Prune by as much as one-half after bloom to get a repeat, Be careful to look for seeds hardy to zone 3-4 and the height

## Plant Profiles - Summer

### Mixing Edibles with Florals:

- Parsley, Basil, Dill, Mint
- Chard, Kale, Cabbage, beets, carrots, broccoli
- Raspberries, Grapes
- Garlic Scapes, onion blooms

**Cosmos:** Best planted from seed, Harvest when buds are colored but haven't opened (will keep insects from pollinating them, Use floral preservative

**Zinnia:** Be sure to grow tall cutting varieties, The secret is pinching when about 18 inches tall. This will encourage branching and ultimately longer stems, Regularly harvest or deadhead, Harvest when the stem is stiff, if it is droopy or bends it is not ready

**Snapdragons:** True cut-and-come again flower, Be sure to select the tall cutting variety, Pinching recommended when there are 5 sets of true leaves snip off the top two to encourage branching (this delays blooms by 2-3 weeks), May need netting – they tend to tip over in storms, Harvest when the bottom 2-3 flowers are open before they are pollinated by insects.

**Lilies:** Try them all: Asiatic, Oriental, Hybrids, Trumpet (they open in that order), Be careful of fragrance that overwhelm, Long-lasting in the vase, Harvest when buds are colored and the bottom flower is just beginning to open, Note: lily pollen is very messy and stains, take a tissue and pull off the pollen anthers

**Hydrangea:** Harvest and strip the leaves, cut and smash bottom stem (or cut on a diagonal) Dip each stem into a cup of boiling water for 30 seconds and immediately put them into a vase or container filled with room temperature water , Other methods: cut up the stem a little and dip them in ALUM before putting them in a vase of fresh water or put the entire flower and stem in water for 45 minutes

## Plant Profiles - Autumn

**Dahlias:** Extremely cold sensitive, ground should be above 60° before planting tubers and/or start indoors, Give them a hard pinch by snipping 3-4 inches of the growing center to encourage branching when they are about a foot tall, Most require staking, Can grow as annuals or lift tender bulbs after 1<sup>st</sup> frost, Dahlias don't unfurl much after harvest so pick them when almost fully open – look for firm and lush petals

**Asters:** Many colors – annuals/perennials, Not much to look at until fall, pinch 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 for a long bloom, Harvest when ¼ of the flowers on stem are open and place in water with floral preservative

**Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susans):** Many varieties, short-lived perennial, biennial, or annual, Harvest when flowers begin to open, Considered a “dirty flower” because they make the water murky – add floral preservative and a few more drops of bleach to water

**Sedum:** ‘Autumn Joy’ most common variety, Can use blooms when green, in full bloom, or after they have dried, Long vase life, Can even use them for bouquets out of water for a couple of days

**Sunflowers:** Most widely grown cut flower worldwide, Can be either direct seeded or grown from transplants, Two-types: branching and single stemmed, the single stemmed is best for cut flowers and plant close together, Look for pollenless types, Harvest as soon as the first petals start to unfurl, strip bottom 3/4s of leaves for longest vase life. No preservative needed.

**Cabbages & Kale & Chard:** For cabbages net early to produce straight stems, remove bottom leaves to control insects, Harvest kales when the leaves are large and firm and remove foliage from the lower 1/3 Pick cabbages anytime they take the shape of rose blossoms and remove lower leaves, Both last long in a vase but the water will smell skunky after a few days – floral preservative helps

### **Plant Profiles - Winter**

**Forcing Bulbs:** Try 1 part alcohol to 7 parts water to control growth

Flowering Branches: Most spring flowering shrubs can be forced after about 6 weeks of cold – they have set their buds the previous season, Best to prune when temps above 32°, a flower bud will usually be round (can cut open to discover flower parts), Place in warm water with floral preservative after recutting stems and away from direct sun, Keep water clean, Top Choices: Forsythia, cherry, crabapple, Witch Hazel, lilacs, willow