

Flowers From a Friend

Written by Jeanette Stehr-Green, WSU certified Clallam County Master Gardener.

An artistic friend has taught me many lessons about flower arranging over the years. Her breathtaking bouquets bring happiness during sad times and turn joyful occasions into celebrations. Here are some of the things I have learned from her.

Flowers best suited for cutting are those that last a long time and have long stems that make for easier arranging. A large number of such flowers can be grown in the home garden. (See Sidebar.)

Many wildflowers, such as lupine and foxglove, make good cut flowers and often add a more exotic look to your bouquet. But beware, some wildflowers, such as daisies, stink!

Variety makes for interesting arrangements. Mix flowers of different sizes, shapes and textures -- tall, short, round, spiky, delicate or bold. Vary the length of the stems in an arrangement; small flowers should have longer stems than larger flowers.

Combine colors that blend together, but also consider pairing flowers that have complementary colors, that is, colors that are opposite each other on a color wheel such as purple and orange. The pairing of complementary colors allows the selections to stand out against each other and brings out the best in each color.

Use extra foliage in your floral arrangements to add interest and mass when fewer flowers are available. Foliage can also prevent or soften color clashes. Ferns, ornamental grasses and the leaves of hostas and hydrangea make wonderful fillers.

Consider the shape and color of the vase or container. Flowers with long stems and large heads go better in tall containers; flowers with short stems go better in short containers. Clear glass or crystal vases work well with most flowers as do gray, dull green, soft dark red, or dull orange containers. Unusual containers are eye catchers but be careful; an overly decorative container can detract from and clash with the flowers.



To keep cut flowers fresh for longer periods follow these tips:

- Cut flowers in the morning using a sharp knife, scissors or clippers so as not to crush the stem.
- Choose flowers that are only half-open or in the early stages of bloom; however, cut dahlias, zinnias, marigolds and chrysanthemums only when the flowers are fully open.
- Place cut flowers immediately in water.
- Before arranging flowers, remove foliage or thorns that will be below the water in the vase; submerged foliage will decay, smell bad and contaminate the water.
- Re-cut stems at a 45-degree angle, cutting between joints along the stem (if present), and place in water immediately.
- Use only clean vases to prevent bacterial growth that will block water uptake by the flowers.
- Keep your arrangement out of direct sunlight and away from heat.
- Change the water and re-cut the stems about every two to three days.

If you aren't as lucky as I am to have a flower-arranging friend, hopefully, these tips will help you create fantastic arrangements and bring your beautiful flower garden into your home.

SIDEBAR: Favorite flowers for cutting

Perennials

asters
achillea (yarrow)
daisies
carnations
chrysanthemums
columbines
coneflowers
delphinium
foxglove
heliopsis
larkspur
lupine
peonies
scabiosa
rudbeckia

Bulbs and rhizomes

callas
daffodils
dahlias
gladiolus
Lilies of the Valley
hybrid and Oriental lilies
tulips

Annuals

celosia
coreopsis
cosmos
lisianthus
marigolds
pansies
salvia
snapdragons
statice
sunflowers
sweet peas
zinnias

Flowering shrubs

forsythia
lilacs
hydrangea
peonies
quince