

Upscale Living

Simple Steps Can Mean A Longer Life For Your Bouquet

(NAPSA)—The finer things in life often need special care—particularly if you want them to last.

As far as personal luxuries go, fresh flowers are pretty low-maintenance. Still, whether it is a dozen roses for a special occasion or a garden bouquet for the kitchen, a little extra attention will lengthen the life of these beauties, too.

Start by selecting the freshest of flowers when you make a purchase. The petals of a flower are a clue to its condition. Look for flowers with petals that are firm and “upright.” Flower buds should just be starting to open.

“Be a conscious consumer,” says Lee Murphy, president of the California Cut Flower Commission in Watsonville, Calif. “Know what a fresh flower looks like and buy those.”

Once you get the flowers home, Murphy suggests these quick, easy steps of flower care:

1. Make sure your container or vase is clean, then, fill it with cool or lukewarm water.

2. Usually, a floral retailer provides packets of “food” with the



Photo: California Cut Flower Commission

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nutrients flowers need to keep going. Prepare the solution as directed on the packet.

3. Before placing them in water, re-cut the flower stems, removing one or two inches from the bottom of the stem. Use a sharp knife that will not smash the stems. This enables your flowers to absorb water easily.

4. Remove leaves that will fall below the water line.

5. Heat will reduce the longevity of fresh flowers, so be sure to place your vase of flowers away

from sources of heat, such as sunny windows, appliances or heating vents.

6. Keep the container filled with water or the floral foam saturated.

7. Every few days re-cut the stems.

Even though fresh flowers will eventually fade, your bouquet doesn't have to disappear. With a little sleight of hand, you can extend the freshness of your arrangement from days to weeks. Buy a floral centerpiece about 10 days before a special occasion. As the flowers age naturally, simply buy more loose flowers and replace the original flowers as needed.

“You can have fresh flowers on your table every week through the holidays,” says Murphy.

Scientific research has established that fresh flowers can improve mood, prompt a smile, and soften the ambiance of an environment. For such a gift, is a few minutes of care too much to ask?

For more information on fresh cut flowers, visit the CCFC's website at www.cffc.org.