

How to clean and care for fresh cut flowers:

Pick garden flowers in the morning. Bring a bucket of fresh water with you and immediately place cut flowers in water. When you bring them indoors, clean flower stems so no leaves will be in water, using a sharp knife give flowers a fresh cut on an angle if possible and place in room temperature water containing proper concentration of commercial floral food. Flower food contains a biocide to inhibit bacterial growth, sugars and an acidifier. Home remedies may contain some of these ingredients but not usually in the proper concentration. Better to use commercial floral food. Avoid picking new bright green leaves as they tend to wilt. After a couple of hours at room temperature, you may place flowers in floral cooler. Keep flowers cool if possible. Sometimes flowers placed in a cool area at night last longer (e.g. garage or outdoor patio). Do not place on top of TV, in direct sunlight, or in front of heat or air conditioning vent. Remember to do everything you can to allow for water uptake – keep water clean and give flowers a fresh cut to clear the stem end every time you place flower in water or floral foam. Cutting stems under water helps prevent air bubbles from forming and blocking water uptake. Current research recommends against pounding woody stems with hammer as it destroys tissues designed to take up water. Dip woody stems (e.g. hydrangea) in alum before placing in water. Check water in arrangement daily. Remove old flowers and greens as decaying materials produce ethylene gas which hastens senescence.

There are two types of floral foam – one for fresh cut flowers; the other for artificial or dried flowers. When working with floral foam for fresh cut flowers, cut the floral foam to the correct size for your container. Drop the cut foam into a bucket of water with the correct amount of commercial floral food. Allow the foam to slowly sink so the top of the foam is level with the water line. The foam should be completely soaked with water and ready to use within five minutes. Never push the floral foam into water as that may create air pockets in the foam which could shorten the life of your floral arrangement. Unfortunately, most floral foam is not reusable (after use it has holes which create air pockets) or recyclable.

I belong to a floral club open to the public which gives floral design demonstrations every few months. See www.FloralArtistsOfTheBayArea.com for details and inspiration.

There is really no right or wrong way to arrange flowers. Here are some ideas which are likely to make a pleasing arrangement. Aren't flowers wonderful?

Arrangements

1. Vase arrangement in classic urn (Fall)

Urn Vase, Camellia leaves, Fall leaves, Eucalyptus, Hydrangea, Gerbera, Alstroemeria, Spray mums, Lily, Rose, Bells of Ireland or Snap Dragon, Hypericum

2. Pumpkin (Fall)

Pumpkin, Liner, Foam, Toothpicks or Bamboo Skewers, Fall leaves, Boxwood, Mums, Carnations, Alstroemeria, Safflower, Rose

3. Stick Vase (Fall)
Rectangular glass vase, Sticks, Gerbera daisy
4. Basket with roses in center (Xmas)
6" Basket, Ribbon, Holiday décor, Roses, Greens (pepper berry, cotoneaster, eucalyptus, cedar, boxwood, pine), Moss
5. Cube Present (Xmas)
Cube Vase, Fancy Ribbon
Pittosporum or Boxwood, Alstromeria
6. Bud vase (Xmas)
Single gerbera daisy or rose decorated with beaded wire and ribbon

Thanks again and happy flowering!