

Care and Handling



EARLY BIRDS GET THE BLOOMS

➤ Wedding work does not have to be— and, in fact, should *not* be— crammed into late Thursday and Friday evenings. Provided that you're buying quality product and following the proper receiving and handling procedures, you should be able to spread the workload throughout the week, beginning on Monday or earlier and having most of it wrapped up by Friday. These "extra days" can be the difference between finishing Saturday morning or Friday at five o'clock. They also ensure that your flowers are in their peak condition when the big day arrives. After all, nothing is worse than having a beautiful bouquet two days *after* the wedding.

Monday Morning — The Big Arrival

Order so that all flowers arrive by Monday, and even consider a Friday delivery for flowers that need the extra opening time, such as lilies, alstroemeria and certain rose varieties. Be sure you have a set of containers that have been cleaned with an approved floral sanitizer ready to receive the product. Once it arrives:

1. Immediately inspect the flowers for potential problems and put them in a cooler with a temperature between 34 F and 38 F. Contact your supplier right away about any replacements or additional product needed.
2. Remove fallen petals or leaves that may have become dislodged during shipping. These carry bacteria and will significantly reduce flower longevity and performance. With flowers shipped in water, add more water treated with the proper flower food dosage to the bucket as necessary.
3. With dry-packed flowers, use a flower hydration solution to unclog stems and ensure that flowers are prepared to take up flower food.
4. Feed those flowers! Mix per instructions fresh city water with the proper amount of professional flower food. Using clippers, carefully cut a half inch off the base of all stems and immediately place them in a prepared bucket.

Monday Afternoon

Get centerpieces and other large designs ready by putting your foam — which you've soaked in a floral food solution, to ensure maximum longevity — in containers, pre-greening them and putting them in the cooler. If the cooler is not large enough to hold all large arrangements, leave your pre-greened pieces outside of the cooler.

Tuesday/Wednesday — Your Big Day

Tuesday and Wednesday are the days to get your large centerpieces made. When the pieces are done, be sure to apply a finishing spray before returning them to the cooler, such as Floralife Finishing Touch, Crowning Glory or Professional Glory, to keep flowers hydrated and protected.

Thursday— Bridal Day

Flowers that are in a bouquet holder can be made on Thursday and will be in their prime on Saturday and Sunday. Bouquet holders are made for starting early and ensuring maximum life for the blooms.

Friday— Wedding Party Day

If there is no water source, corsages and boutonnieres can be made up on Friday (otherwise, do them earlier in the week). With these items, finishing sprays are critical. The goal is to get nutrients to the flowers, and items like Floralife's Finishing Touch, which is applied in a light mist, will accomplish this.

These steps are good "rules of thumb" to follow when preparing for weddings. But there are always exceptions, depending on the number of designers you have on hand and how many other weddings you have throughout the weekend. So keep a journal of what works, and what does not. And remember: Last minute mistakes are expensive and often result in a disappointed bride; ordering and receiving product early ensures a happy bride and a more profitable wedding for you.

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DIYERS CAN'T DO IT ALL

Operating with the theory that "a smaller slice of the pie is better than no slice of it at all," more florists are working with do-it-yourself (DIY) brides, by providing them with the product and the space to create their designs — for a fee, of course. If brides question your fee for receiving and holding the blooms, be sure to explain that florists are not only designers but also, in a sense, flower-sitters: You must order, receive, stage and nurture the blooms in a way that ensures they are in full bloom on the big day, and there are costs associated with each of those steps. — J.S.