

Get Out Your Greens

ARE YOU GUILTY OF KEEPING GREENS IN BOXES IN the storage cooler, until you need them for designs? If so, you're not alone, says Kim Morrill, AIFD, of Morrill Support, Inc. It's the *modus operandi* of many designers to hide the greens until they're needed. But not only does this create added work (think of the time spent pulling the box off the shelf, opening it, pulling the greens, putting it back), it also is depriving you of sales.

Look in any shelter magazine, including *Architectural Digest*, says Morrill, and you'll see that greens are very "on trend." But florists are not necessarily following suit. "You'll open up a magazine and see it, but you'll never see it at the florist," says Morrill. "You can't sell anything you hide in the back."

Morrill cites the effective example of an Alaska florist, who used greens in the front end of his shop to entice customers. By placing bunches of curly willow in tall glass vases throughout the shop, he transformed the shop into a forest, and customers loved the look and got inspired to buy. A good time of year to use this method: Post-holiday season, when the shop seems a bit empty and greens are a natural way to fill in the holes.

Care Comes First

If additional sales opportunities aren't a reason to pull your greens out of the boxes, then shelf life should be. Most greens should be treated as any other cut flower: get them out of the box, re-cut them, put them into a flower food solution and into the display cooler. Low temperatures and humidity are of utmost importance with woody stems such as boxwood, myrtles and euonymus, as well as traditional Christmas greens. Mark Thompson of The Hiawatha Corporation (www.hiawathacorp.com) in Shelton, Wash., says the Christmas greens will last longer if they are kept cool, at 34°F. "And try to keep them out of direct sunlight and out of windy areas because that will just draw the moisture out," Thompson says.

Larry Levy, vice president and cut flower buyer at Hillcrest



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Think Again About These Greens

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— C.P.F.

Getting the Green

Displaying greens can help increase sales — but keep in mind that traditional holiday greens are more prone to drying out than other greens, so keep these tips in mind, from The Hiawatha Corporation.

1. Cut greens are a lot like cut flowers, they last longer if they are kept cool.
2. Display a few greens, but keep most of them in the cooler (34°F is ideal; they can also tolerate slight freezing).
3. Don't display greens in direct sunlight or under a heat lamp.
4. Don't display greens in the wind or where a fan blows directly on them.
5. Put greens in the cooler every 24 hours or overnight. The moisture and the cool air will prolong shelf life "dramatically."

— C.P.F.

Gardens, Inc., in Paramus, N.J., agrees that maintaining moisture is the biggest challenge, with the holiday greens especially. "It's important to have a humid atmosphere so [the greens] don't dry out," he says. If boxwood starts to look dehydrated, immersing it in water will help revive it, Levy says.

When it comes to ethylene damage, the few Christmas greens that produce it are Douglas fir, redwood and white pine, according to Gay Smith of Pokon-Chrysal International, a frequent contributor to *Floral Management* magazine. To prevent ethylene damage, she recommends storing the greens apart from other flowers and foliage.

Safe Cutting Tips

Re-cutting greens upon arrival in the shop saves designer time, says Morrill — but it has its hazards, especially when it comes to woody stems and holiday greens like noble fir, cedar and pine. "It's the easiest time of the year to get cut because you're pulling so hard," she says. Morrill recommends using a pruner as opposed to a knife to do the re-cutting on holiday greens.

Another safeguard Morrill recommends is an adhesive thimble: put a Band-Aid on your thumb and wrap it with floral tape to provide a protective barrier between you, the greens and the cutting tools. 🌿

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