

## AISLE-READY ROSES



**FRESH START** The 'Judy' roses on the left lived twice as long as those on the right. The difference? The long-lasting ones were hydrated in a freshly made solution, while the others were hydrated in a re-used solution.

> Weddings are wonderful, but let's face it: They can be a stress carnival of roller coaster emotions and dizzying details for both the bride and the florist. The last things anyone needs are flowers that shatter, go bent neck, do not open, or wilt before the event even starts. But don't fret, you can have roses that don't cause any unwelcome drama by following simple care and handling techniques and some common sense strategies.

### Find the Right Match

Brides often choose by color, but your job is to pick with performance in mind. In a recent test of 38 varieties of cut roses, we found vase life ranging from 4.5 to 18.8 days. Even varieties in the same color differed widely in their performance. Also, some varieties won't last as long or open as fully when stored for too long.

Don't find out you've made the wrong choice at the altar. Always test a variety before ordering. Place flowers in a vase on the counter and watch. If the variety is prone to bent neck or disease, doesn't open fully, or dies quickly, don't buy it. However, even the best variety can have these symptoms if not handled properly.

### Don't Let Their Past Haunt You

What happens to the flower before and during shipping — not to mention the length of the transport — will affect performance. You have no control over this except to choose well-known, reputable farms and suppliers. Don't be afraid to ask what pre-treatments flowers receive at the farm and during transport, and how long the typical shipping time is. Growers should treat ethylene-sensitive flowers (roses, carnations, snapdragons, and delphinium) with anti-ethylene agents such as EthylBloc™ (1-MCP) or Chrysal AVB (silver thiosulphate, or STS) prior to shipping or while on the transport truck. Flowers should not spend more than three to four days in transport from the grower to the wholesaler.

### Show Respect

Once flowers get to your doorstep, your actions can make or break the subsequent quality. Unpack them immediately, cut the stems and hydrate using commercial solutions. Always mix according to instructions. If you can't process at arrival, place boxes immediately in a cooler at 35F and process the next day. (Tropical flowers should be kept at 55F.) You need to avoid storage, as quality and vase life will suffer the longer flowers are stored.

### Start Clean

The key at this stage is to use clean, sterilized buckets, vases, tools, work benches, and freshly made solutions. Our test showed vase life declined 38 percent to 56 percent for flowers in a reused hydration solution compared to a freshly made solution. Bacteria develop quickly in solutions, blocking the stem and preventing nutrients from reaching the flower. Consequently, flowers will die prematurely. If there's a cloudy appearance or odor, change the solution.

Keeping flowers cold during hydration and storage is essential to thwarting bacteria production and slowing the flowers' metabolic processes. Always use a commercial flower food, even if just for the day of the event, to promote flower opening and overall performance. Once arrangements are ready, keep them cold until transport.

### Create a Healthy Space

Visit the location at the same time of the event to map out proper placement around areas with direct sunlight (avoid them!). Have a backup plan for bad weather as you'll always want to cover flowers during transport if it rains. If the sky is clear, water potted plants early enough so there's no overflow at the base. You can't really do much about the temperature, except keep plants hydrated and out of direct sunlight.

No matter what wedding flowers you use, the principles of proper sanitation, temperature and flower food apply. Make sure you have enough help to get through all the hectic preparations. If you rush and cut corners, your flowers will suffer and the bride will remember you for all the wrong reasons. If you take your time, pay attention to detail and provide proper care, your work will shine with the bride. 🌸

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