

Bridal Q&A

By W. Kurt Schroeder, AAF, AIFD, PFCI

QUESTION: I USE ASIATIC AND ORIENTAL LILIES FOR weddings, and, sometimes, the petals are transparent and the blooms don't last. Why?

Answer: Lilies are ethylene sensitive, so exposure to the hormone can result in transparent petals, bud blasting and leaf yellowing. (The U.S. Department of Agriculture says ethylene is responsible for 30 percent of all floriculture crop loss.) Work with your supplier so that you buy only lilies that have been treated with an ethylene-action inhibitor.

Remember, research suggests that if you store some lilies (especially Orientals) below 35°F, they can suffer chill damage, including brown patches on buds and petals. I recommend storing lilies at 36°F to 38°F.

Q: Should I remove bands and plastic sleeves when I receive wedding flowers from my wholesaler?

A: Remove all wrapping, sleeves and banding. This reduces condensation and increases airflow, which keeps botrytis from forming. Plus, you'll have "design ready" flowers for your wedding or special event.

Hydrating roses in a tight, packed sleeve with banding can cause "dents" to form in the petals because blooms don't have enough room to expand fully.

Q: My wholesaler delivers wedding and special event flowers in Proconas. Do I need to reprocess them?

A: It depends. If your supplier ships flowers in a properly mixed, clean flower food solution with no visible foliage below the solution level, don't reprocess. If that's not the case, you should reprocess. Either way, you still should remove all sleeves and banding from the flower bunches.

Q: Some special design projects require us to spray paint flowers and foliage to match or complement a color theme. Do spray paints harm cut flowers and foliage?

A: Some spray paints are flower friendly and do not harm the blooms or change vase life expectancy. Check the label — it should indicate whether it can be used on fresh flowers. When in doubt, test it.

Q: How do you stop hydrangeas from wilting in corsage and wedding designs?

A: To maximize hydration, cut hydrangeas under clean water, and use a hydration solution and a clean container of fresh flower food. Be sure to use a finishing spray.

Don't use hydrangeas in corsages unless you use a lapel vial with a solution source. Hydrangeas are great in hand-tied bouquets — you can leave them in a fresh flower food solution until the event and add ribbon treatment at the last minute.

Q: I like using gels to arrange reception centerpieces, but will they decrease vase life?

A: They could. Don't use them unless you have tested the vase life in-house. While gels are decorative and are used with water, some can reduce the vase life of fresh flowers. Instead, design the flowers in a vase insert and use the gel in

A Bouquet of Memories

Two days after the wedding, a bride brings in her now-wilted bouquet, hoping we can preserve it. Is it possible?

Good luck. Given the flowers' stress and lack of solution supply, bringing them back will be almost impossible. A better approach is to educate the bride before the wedding. Get the bouquet immediately after the wedding, so you have better success freeze drying it or drying it with another method. Plan ahead and offer preservation services at the consultation time (for an additional fee).

My personal take: Large dried bouquets often turn into dust collectors. I used to suggest that brides let us press dry a few blooms from her bouquet and the groom's boutonniere. Those could be framed with the wedding invitation or ceremony pamphlet. Every bride will have wall space to hang this memento on.

— K. S.


the outer container as a design element.

Q: How do I keep gardenias from turning brown in wedding bouquets and corsages?

A: Here are my tips:

1. Continually spray them with a mist solution designed for fresh flowers.
2. Store them in the cooler at 34°F to 36°F at 75 percent to 85 percent relative humidity.
3. Arrange all other flowers and supplies before bringing gardenias out of the cooler.
4. Use the collar that comes with most gardenias to protect the perimeter petals in your bouquet, corsage or boutonniere.
5. Design quickly and place a wet, soft tissue over each gardenia bloom. Store the finished bouquet in a plastic bag in the cooler.

Q: If I use a bouquet holder, I don't have to water the bouquet, right?

A: Wrong. A bouquet holder saves you labor and sometimes product — which saves you money. But the solution source is small and dense with stems, so it gets used rapidly. You must replenish it or use one of the newer wicking holders. And, make sure you soak your bouquet holders and all wet foam in clean fresh flower food solution. 

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