

DON'T LET YOUR PLANTS GO TO POT

> Care and handling of potted flowering plants at retail florists is a vital step in maintaining quality and retaining loyal customers. Most potted flowering plants have a long shelf life and become a true part of a customer's home. To ensure your plants seem to never wear out their welcome or ever make a mess all over the carpet, retailers must be picky about their sourcing and shipping and particularly about their care and handling.

Pick the Best

Retailers can't let plant-ordering and receiving become an afterthought. Make sure you are getting quality plants from a reputable grower by checking that plants arrive free of disease and pests, with healthy foliage, buds and flowers and moist soil. Flowers should be at the proper stage of marketability upon arrival. Depending on the crop, at least 25 percent of the flowers should be open. Buds should be showing color or beginning to open to ensure they are developed enough to open and blossom fully.

Retail florists must provide proper conditions to keep plants healthy during display. Care begins as soon as the plants arrive. Always unbox plants and remove sleeves immediately upon arrival. Check for insects and diseases and discard any affected plants. If sick and buggy plants become a familiar sight, it is time to find a new supplier.

Drink This In

If you have a set time of the day when you walk around the shop and water the plants, abandon the habit right now. Plants should be watered when the soil is dry — when they're done drinking rather than when you're ready to open the H₂O bar. For disease-control purposes, do not get foliage or flowers wet when watering. Water should be applied to the top of the media to avoid excess water on the foliage. To avoid salt build up, allow water to drain freely. This may require removing a foil pot cover. Never let the pot sit in water. This deprives roots, the bloodline of plant systems, of oxygen. If this occurs, roots can die, followed by death of the entire plant. Remember, letting plants dry out is just as damaging as overwatering.

Plant Yourself Here

Place plants in a well-lit area, but avoid direct sunlight. Always keep plants away from ripening produce or other ethylene sources, including cigarette smoke. Exposure to ethylene can cause flower bud and leaf yellowing, wilt or drop. Ethylene also makes flowers die quicker.

Display temperatures between 65-70 F are optimal. If possible, display potted bulbs at 40 F to prolong their inherently short shelf life. A display cooler with lights is the ideal display condition for these species. Don't send

a plant home without a care tag. Be sure customers know if their potted plant can be placed outside after the blooms are spent indoors. If you don't have care tags, ask your supplier or make your own branded ones.

As a retailer, you are responsible for maintaining the last link in the quality chain. Don't be the weak one. 🌿

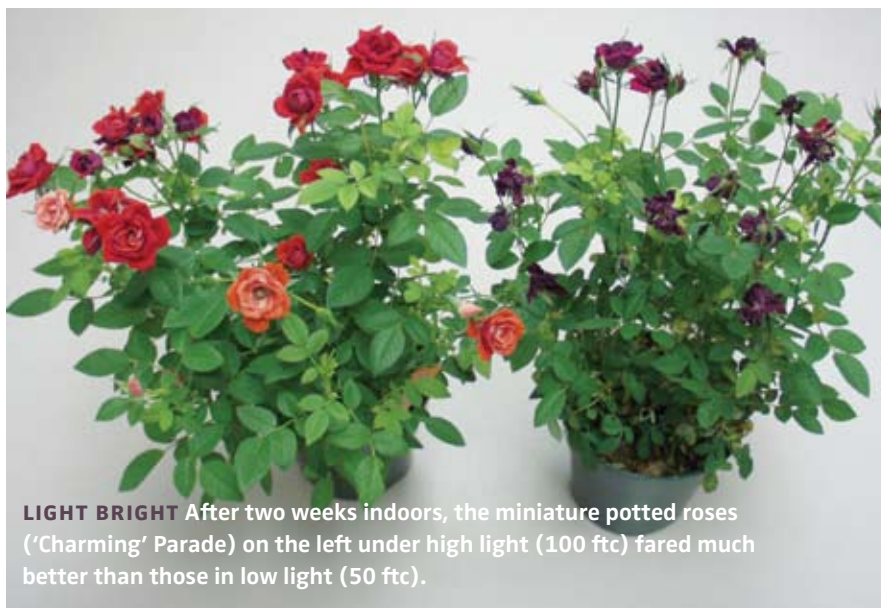
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GREEN THUMB 101

Even florists need a refresher course in caring for potted, flowering plants.

Here's yours:

- Obtain quality plants from reputable suppliers and ask for specific care needs.
- Unbox and unsleeve plants immediately upon arrival.
- Check for diseases and insects and discard if infested. Remove diseased or damaged leaves or flower parts.
- Check potting-mix moisture and water if dry to the touch.
- Place plants in a well-lit area, but avoid direct sunlight.
- Display away from ethylene sources, such as ripening fruit, truck exhaust or combustible heaters.
- Display at optimum temperatures of 65-70 F. Display potted bulbs at 40 F in display coolers with lights to prolong pot life.
- Check daily for watering needs. Water only when needed and make sure water drains from the pot. Do not get foliage or flowers wet and never let plants dry out.
- Remove unmarketable or old plants from the display area and keep the area clean and free of plant and soil debris. Keep only healthy plants.
- Always provide care tags to customers.



LIGHT BRIGHT After two weeks indoors, the miniature potted roses ('Charming' Parade) on the left under high light (100 ftc) fared much better than those in low light (50 ftc).