DYEING CARNATION FLOWERS*

Dyeing flowers different colors is a practice that is literally"old as the hills", but recently it has become a rather important practice with carnations. Retailers are interested in something different and many of the novelty varieties possessing attractively different colored flowers may not have vigor and productiveness.

The variety White Sim lends itself quite well to coloring by means of the absorption dyes. Recently we had the opportunity of seeing how excellent results can be obtained, so we are passing them on to you.

Since dyes are absorbed better in flowers that are allowed to become rather dry internally, when the flowers are cut from the plant in the morning they should not be placed in water. Instead they should be kept out of direct sunlight but in a location where the temperature is at 60° F. or somewhat higher so water will evaporate from the tissue. The flower should remain in this location for about 3 or 4 hours, at which time the ends of the stems should be cut and then placed immediately in the absorption dye.

To obtain maximum absorption, the dye solution should be warm, 80° to 100° F., and the atmosphere should be dry to facilitate rapid loss of moisture from the tissue, thus assuring rapid movement of the dye.

The commercial flower dyes, such as Aljo, Ropco, Rainbow Flower Dyes, Bloomlife, etc., are very satisfactory. The amount of dye used can be varied to increase or decrease the color intensity to suit individual likes. Different colors and shades may be obtained by mixing different color dyes.

In a period of 30 to 60 minutes the desired colors will be obtained, and the flowers are then removed from the dye solutions and placed in water in a refrigerator. Dyeing does not impair the keeping quality; in fact, some retailers say the dyed flowers last longer. A wide variety of colors can be obtained by this means, and different effects are possible by removing the flower at intervals so the penetration of the dye varies.

If a netted effect is desired, only enough time should elapse for the main veins to show color, while if a more solid color is desired, a longer time is necessary in the dye solution. The dye solutions will probably keep for several days at room temperature and should be reheated to 100° F. prior to using. How many times a mixture of dye can be reused depends on how many flowers are tinted each time. Only experience can give this information.

An interesting sidelight on the dyeing process is that flowers cut from plants in soil that has just been watered do not dye as well as from plants in soil that is drier. Probably the tissue of the latter flowers is drier or less hydrated so it dyes better. Flowers from plants in soil that is high in soluble salts do not dye well, presumably because of the effect of such a condition on the concentration of the dissolved materials in the cell sap. In addition, flowers from one-year old plants dye more satisfactorily than from 2- or 3- year old plants, but the reason is not known.

As a result of dyeing you will get some weird colors, but in the main they are very pleasing and will attract a great deal of attention.

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A bird can roost on only one branch; a mouse can drink no more than its fill from a river.

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