

FOOD FIX: FIVE STEPS TO PROPER DOSAGE

> Consumers want flowers that last. Vase life is their No. 1 priority, according to Prince and Prince and recent American Floral Endowment studies. Properly dispensed flower food can add days to flower life — and usually costs no more than one-half to 1 percent of cost of goods. But used incorrectly, food can do more harm than good — curtailing vase life, raising costs and wasting time and resources.

Proper dosage comes down to having a system and sticking to it, no matter how busy the shop gets or how new the designer is to the team. Here's your five-to-thrive food fix system.

1. Use a better yardstick.

Every shop has a standard bucket for processing flowers. And most know to use a scoop of powder flower food per gallon. Using powder flower food sounds simple, right? But can you say with certainty that your bucket is really a gallon? If not, your dosage is off from the get-go. Time for an intervention: Get all the shop's standard buckets. With a measuring cup, fill each with water to one gallon, take a yardstick and mark with a magic marker the waterline on the yardstick. Use that yardstick as you fill all the buckets to ensure you have the right amount. The yardstick method ensures accurate measurement with one instrument, without the hassles of marking each bucket.

2. Pre-mix for precision.

Adding one pump of flower food to every vase or "sprinkling" a little flower food in a vase and adding water are common mistakes. One pump of Crystal Clear flower food is the proper dose for one quart of water, but rarely does a container have exactly one quart of water. The easier, more accurate way to prepare flower food for the day is to pre-mix the flower food in gallon containers. Start with a clean container. (Milk containers, old flower food containers or watering cans work IF you've cleaned them with Floralife DCD or Chrysal Bucket Cleaner.) Let's say you need to pre-mix 10 gallons of

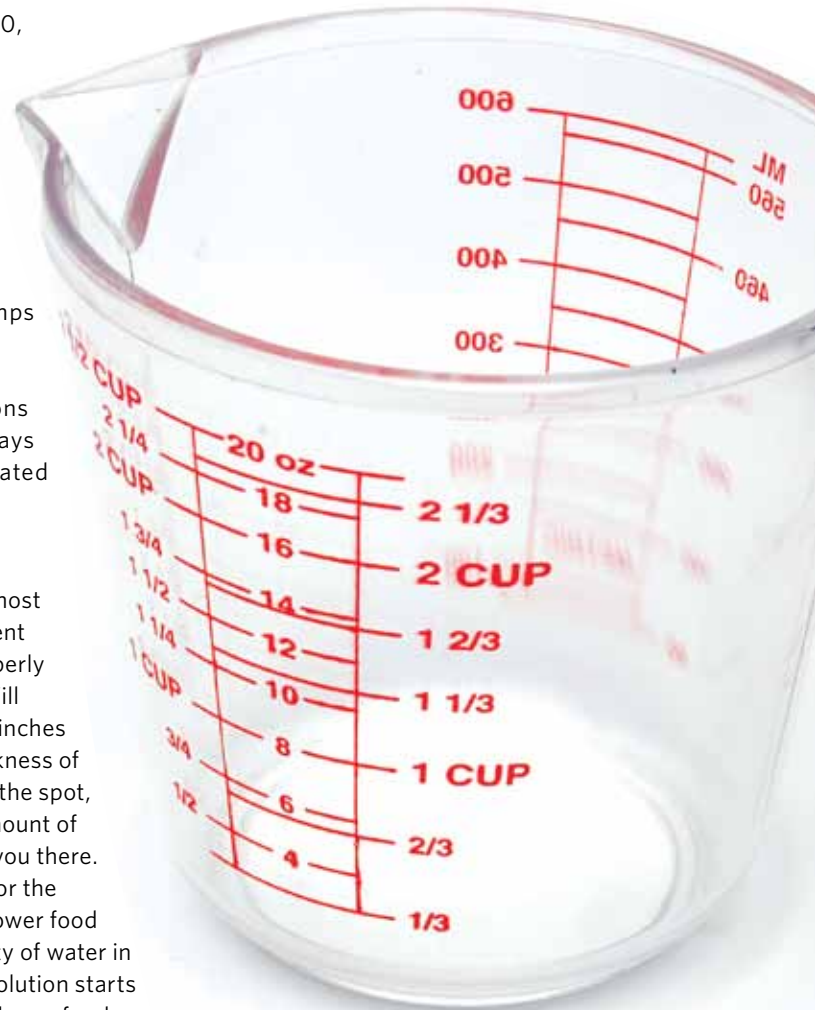
flower food. Grab 10, one-gallon jugs and add the correct amount of flower food to each. If using powder, add one large scoop. For Floralife Crystal Clear, add four pumps to every gallon. Fill each with water. Flower food solutions are fine for a few days and can be refrigerated for longer storage.

3. Soak smart.

Foam provides the most enriching environment when soaked in properly mixed flower food. Fill your soak tub a few inches higher than the thickness of a single brick. Mark the spot, and measure the amount of water it took to get you there. Then mark the tub for the proper amount of flower food to add to the quantity of water in the tub. When the solution starts to drop, add mixed flower food from premeasured jugs. Empty the tub every two days and clean it weekly.

4. Properly pump.

The simple rule for injector pumps is, "If it's clicking, it's working." Flower food injector pumps use suction to pull solution; clicking indicates pumping. To ensure the system is pumping the right mixture, pull the hose and insert it into a 24-ounce container of water, then pump a five-gallon bucket full of water. The 24-ounce container should have 14 ounces of water remaining (the pump sucks two ounces of solution per gallon). This can vary an ounce or two, but more than three ounces of variation means it is not dosing properly and needs a thorough cleaning or, possibly, servicing. These are complex systems, and most have service contracts, so contact the manufacturer instead of trying to fix it.



5. Keep it clean.

Twice a year, clean injector pumps to flush out built-up bacteria. Use the same technique for testing the injector pump. Place the hose from your flower food in the container of liquid bleach. Pump five gallons of water into a bucket. Again, you will see approximately 10 ounces of bleach missing. This will indicate your pump is dosing properly and will also shock any bacteria in the system. Remove the flower food hose and place it to the side. Let your system sit overnight, rinse the hose clean and place it in the flower food solution. Pump a gallon of flower food solution through the system to clear it and you have a clean system. 🌿

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