

# Inventor makes life a little rosier for flower lovers

Device reportedly will keep a cut rose fresh for 59 days

... And a rose, she lived as roses do, the space of a morn.  
— Francois de Malherbe

By Judith I. Brennan  
The Register

**M**ichael Farrell just nipped the French poet's verse in the bud.

The Anaheim inventor and horticulturist claims he can stretch the life of a rose to 59 mornings, thanks to an iodine-filled vial he developed.

"Now the guy bringing home roses to his wife can keep pointing to that show of affection as they live on," Farrell says. No longer will that \$50 investment last only three to five days.

If his claims hold water, Farrell's two-inch plastic device — called the Living Frog — could bring the \$750 million rose market into full bloom. Florists say they would favor such a gadget if it successfully increases the shelf-life of their stock.

Alas, it will not be available to save those Valentine bouquets. The 41-year-old Anaheim inventor doesn't expect to be peddling the rose-life extender for at least 40 days.

A horticultural expert at the University of California, Davis, and the international floral wire service FTD are scrutinizing Farrell's invention. FTD wants an exclusive marketing agreement on Farrell's "frog" — a florist's term for a flower holder — if it works, says Jennifer Griffin, a coordinator for FTD.

"To last two months sounds a bit on the far side to me,"

says Dean Lee of Bear Creek Gardens, a Santa Ana wholesale rose grower.

"This could cut our weekly standing (rose) orders in half," adds Mark Cujak, owner of Tustin Florists and Gifts. "On the other hand, people would be willing to spend \$50 on roses for more than just special occasions if they last that long. Besides, it could cut down on our spoilage tremendously — if it really works."

Farrell's frog prevents bacteria from getting into the stem of a cut rose, which blocks its water supply and causes it to die. Inside the unit are special fibers with tiny pores that allow only water, not bacteria, to pass through to the rose. A small sponge doused with iodine is meshed between the rose stem and fibers and acts as a bacteria killer.

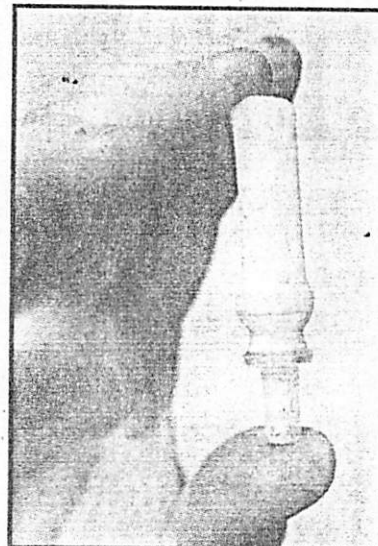
UC Davis professor Michael Reid is doing an independent study, and so far, a rose has stayed fresh for two weeks. "This is very exciting, but a lot more studies have to be done before I will commit to saying (the device will produce) a life span of 59 days."

Reid became interested in the frog last December, shortly after Farrell created it in the back laboratory room of his Anaheim start-up business, Agro-Clonics. Two months later, Farrell says he's perfected the device to a product that will cost florists about 10 or 15 cents each. It costs him less than a nickel to make it through a factory in Tijuana.

"My family's been in the floral business 75 years, and no matter how revolutionary this thing is at that price, there will still be people who will go for it like crazy and those who won't," says Mike Macres, owner of Macres Florist in Santa Ana.



Clay Miller/The Register



Michael Farrell shows off a rose that had been attached for 13 days to his Living Frog — a small vial that attaches to the bottom of a rose. Farrell says it can keep a flower fresh for 59 days. At left, a closeup of the bacteria-fighting device.