

LIFE AFTER THE GARDEN: RESURRECT YOUR ROSES

> Now that hybridizers have developed and released garden rose varieties that meet the shipping and vase life needs of the cut flower industry, it's time to start bringing them into your shop so non-gardeners can enjoy their beauty. But there are a few things to note about buying, processing and storing these lovely blooms.

Pick with Purpose

Learn the varieties that are best for your purposes (See Fresh Choices, p. 14). Some of the varieties that have been around for a long time, such as 'Constance Spry', don't have the week-plus vase life that the newer varieties boast — but they may serve your purposes well if it's for an event. (A good chart for selection can be found at <http://ottoandsons-nursery.com/rose-pages/otto-english-garden.htm>.)

Growers should treat roses with a hydration product and an ethylene inhibitor, especially if roses are shipped out of water. If roses are shipped in Proconas, they should be in a hydration solution. Ask your suppliers how the roses have been treated.

Despite the prolific breeding in garden roses, their quantities can be limited, so place your orders early to ensure supplies will be available. Growers tend to hold roses for their best customers when supplies become scarce. Pre-paying orders will ensure you'll get the blooms you want. Be sure to ask about stem counts in bunches. As new markets and varieties emerge, stem counts vary from 10 to 25, so you want to know what to expect.

If you're fortunate enough to have local production — or a wholesaler who keeps garden roses in its inventory — and can see the roses before you buy them, watch for and avoid fully opened and soft flowers, limp stems, damaged or diseased foliage and flower heads with mold or pressure spots indicating rot, which will spread very quickly. Purchase flowers that have a firm feel, turgid stems and healthy green foliage.

Processing, Handling

While garden roses have become heartier, they will still be thirsty upon arrival after being shipped by air or truck. Therefore, it's important to hydrate the

flowers immediately upon receipt. First, remove only leaves and thorns that will fall beneath the waterline. Carefully use a rose stripper or a soft cloth, taking care not to damage the stems in the process. Cut the stems underwater, taking one inch from each, and then place them in a hydration solution. After treatment, hold the roses in a solution of fresh flower food for at least two hours. Misting frequently will aid the hydration process and encourage proper development. Then, refrigeration at 34 to 36F with relative humidity at 80 to 90 percent will harden, condition and prepare the roses for use.

When treated properly, roses should last from six to 12 days. Supply consumers with a packet of fresh flower food and a recipe for the solution. Tell them to re-cut stems before arranging and again every other day. And let them know that frequent misting is very beneficial. 🌹

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DESIGN AND PHOTO BY TIM FARRELL, AAF, AIFD, PFCI



PLAY ME A ROSE The 'Piano' family of garden roses provides an array of pink options: 'Piano', the darkest pink shown, 'Pink Piano' is the medium pink, and 'Mariateresa' is the lightest pink.

Eye Candy

Feast your eyes on more gorgeous garden rose varieties here:

David Austin
www.davidaustinroses.com/english/Advanced.asp

Rosen Tantau
www.rosen-tantau.com

Meiland
www.meiland.com

Green Valley Floral
www.greenvalleyfloral.com

Alexandra Farms
www.alexandrafarms.com