

Marigold: Care Tips for the Florist

1. Purchase marigolds in the bloom stage, when the flower has opened but before the bottom petals show any signs of wilting or sagging. Marigolds that are too old for use in arrangements tend to take on a kind of grayish tone instead of maintaining a bright, full color.

2. When marigolds arrive in your shop, condition them as soon as possible by cutting off about ½ inch from the bottoms of the stems.

3. Strip off *all* foliage from the stems. Marigolds have a bad reputation among florists because of their strong, disagreeable odor. However, this odor is emitted from the foliage, not from the flower head itself, so removing the leaves also removes the smell. For giant marigolds, this is a simple step, since the flowers are single-stemmed. French marigolds, on the other hand, are multi-stemmed, so it takes a long time to strip the foliage completely. Nevertheless, this is still a necessary and economical step, resulting in numerous usable flower heads.

4. After stripping the foliage from the flowers, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly to remove all traces of odor.

5. Next, place the flowers in a solution of warm water and preservative and harden them in a cool, dark place with moderate refrigeration. Without their foliage, marigolds depend

completely on their stems for food and water, so it is important to allow the stems to take up a sufficient quantity of solution to nourish the blooms.

6. While storing marigolds in your shop, check the water supply daily and replenish with water and preservative as needed.

7. Giant marigolds should be wired before using them in an arrangement because the heavy heads put too much strain on the stems, which are hollow near the blooms. The best method of wiring is to push a short length of wire down through the top of the flower and on into the stem. French marigolds do not require wiring.

8. Giant marigolds generally come in pale yellows or pumpkin oranges and are best used as the primary focus of an arrangement. The pale yellow varieties are ideal for light, summery designs. Try mixing them with cut lemons, which add a bright spot of color as well as a clean, pleasing scent. Pumpkin-colored varieties, of course, fit in well with autumnal or Halloween arrangements.

9. French marigolds come in shades of burnt orange, a perfect color for fall arrangements. Unlike giant marigolds, however, they are best employed as a filler or secondary flower.

What to Tell Your Customers

1. Marigolds are a hardy vase flower, but they do require a certain amount of care to maintain their freshness as long as possible. They are especially susceptible to early wilting if exposed to drafts or excessive heat, so they should be kept away from air vents, fans, radiators, television sets and windows exposed to full sun.

2. Since marigolds stripped of their foliage depend solely on their stems for water and food, it is important to check water levels daily. When adding water to an arrangement, mix it with preservative from the florist.

3. Marigolds treated in this way should have a long vase life of a week or more.

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