BERGSTRAND '81

STABY-OSU

Plant Potpourri

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Receiving cut flowers

Cut flowers must have first priority in the unpacking process. They must be taken care of before flowering or green plants because of their perishability. It is not enough to place shipping boxes in coolers. Air circulation surrounding all boxed floral crops, particularly cut flowers, can extend shelf life substantially. Prompt removal of cut flowers from packing boxes reduces harmful ethylene levels, which increase inside sealed containers and in tightly packed boxes.

Heat also builds up inside stacked boxes, causing premature aging of cut flowers. Storage and handling areas for cuts should be protected from vehicle exhaust fumes, petroleum-fueled heaters, sun, and hot or cold drafts.

Cutting stems

If flowers are shipped in buckets of water, they need not be recut unless the stem ends have been out of water. Stems seal shut within 30 seconds after being exposed to air. Unless they are recut, premature wilting occurs because stems cannot draw up necessary water.

If flowers are shipped "dry," or if they are simply packed in ice, recut all stems with a sharp knife upon receipt of the shipment. Cutting stems on an angle offers little or no advantage. However, a knife is better than scissors. Only ¼-inch to ½-inch of the stem should be removed. If floral preservative is used, daily cutting is not necessary.

of time preservative solution remains useful depends on many factors. If cloudiness in the water occurs, indicating the presence of microorganisms, the solution probably should be discarded. Follow the directions given by the manufacturer for the proper solution strength. More is not better.

The use of preservative can double the life of cut flowers. Bacteria action in the water is reduced, and flowers retain their color and turgidity when open.

Water temperature

Post-harvest failure to properly draw up water through stems is one of the biggest problems of cut flowers. This is especially true after flowers have been out of water in the shipping process and have become dehydrated.

After recutting stems, place in 110 degree Fahrenheit water (bath temperature) containing floral preservative. The water will return to room temperature within an hour, and flowers can be refrigerated then. After this initial treatment, it no longer is necessary to use warm water.

Removing foliage

Remove all excess foliage from stems that will be underwater. This is especially important on daisies and pompons. Foliage in water deteriorates, causing bacteria to form, plugging up the cells in the stems. When removing ex-

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Care of cut flowers upon arrival at the supermarket is vital. Many are sent packed in tightly-sealed boxes (left), which must be unpacked and cared for immediately (below left). Part of that care is stripping the leaves so they will not be underwater (below), but care must be taken not to bruise the "bark." Next, stems are cut with a knife and the flowers are placed in preservative-treated water.

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Floral preservative

Using flower preservative solutions throughout the entire marketing channel increases profits and consumer satisfaction. The length

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Removing foliage

Remove all excess foliage from stems that will be underwater. This is especially important on daisies and pompons. Foliage in water deteriorates, causing bacteria to form, plugging up the cells in the stems. When removing excess foliage from roses, be sure not to damage the "bark," or crush the stems. This particularly shortens the life of roses.

Containers and water

Use nonmetallic containers, since preservative solutions often are rendered inactive by metal ions. Plastic containers are the most practical, since glass and pottery are subject to chipping and breaking. Wash all containers twice a month with a solution of bleach and warm water, using one part bleach to seven parts water. Scrub the inside with a brush and rinse well.

Fill the container so one quarter to one third of the stems are under water. The size of the vase should be appropriate to the stem length. When bunches are submerged in a too-deep container, air circulation is cut off, the sleeve becomes soaked and flowers decay because of excessive moisture and lack of air.

Too little water in vases means that flowers often absorb all the available water, then stand in dry containers and wilt.

Avoid narrow-neck containers that pack bunches tightly together. The best size buckets have openings 7- to 8-inches wide and are approximately 7- to 10-inches deep.

Do not mist cut flowers, even though this might appear attractive. Water accumulation on blooms causes them to rot and deteriorate.

Storing inventories

Do not store cut flowers in a cooler where fruits and vegetables are kept. Produce gives off ethylene gas, detrimental to both plants and cut flowers. Do not store shipping cartons containing cut flowers on top of each other. Heat builds up when air is not freely circulating around the entire box.

Do not store "old" flowers in the same unit as "fresh" shipments. Aging, damaged flowers produce high amounts of ethylene gas that in turn can hasten aging of freshly-shipped flowers.

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