

Springtime with Potted Plants

By Mary Westbrook

LATE-WINTER SNOWSTORMS AND WET WEATHER could leave customers clamoring for a bit of springtime early this year. Like cut flowers and foliage, plants have specific care-and-handling needs. Louise Strutner of Nurserymen's Exchange in Half Moon Bay, Calif., worked with Floral Management editors to create this month's tip sheet for extending plant life and increasing quality.

Rules to Live By

Buying high quality plants will help increase longevity and customer satisfaction. Invest the same amount of attention in ordering plants as you do when you choose cut flowers. If you can, visit your supplier before you buy. Look for plants that are well watered (no drooping leaves or stalks) with lots of upright flower buds. Foliage should be free of discoloration, leaf drop and insects. (See Info to Go for general plant care tips).

This Month's Selections

Get your scissors out: Strutner offers these bulletin-board ready tips for some of the varieties in this month's Fresh Choices column, p. 16:

Stone Pot Bonsai: Keep potting mix moist, but not saturated. Inside, place the plant in bright, indirect light. Outside, choose partial shade. Store plants between 65°F and 75°F. **Tips for customers:** Appropriate for USDA zones 10 to 12, bonsai should not be fertilized in the winter.

Dwarf Wisteria: This plant tolerates (and likes) heavy watering. Post-flowering, long, green seedpods develop, so don't cut off flowers. Instead, pinch them after flowering to maintain your desired shape. **Tips for customers:** Dwarf Wisteria will thrive in bright light and full sun outdoors (USDA zones six to 9). As soon as leaves appear in the spring, begin fertilizing. Fertilize once per month with a balanced water-soluble fertilizer. Transplant the wisteria at end of winter to a larger pot, if needed, and then weave it onto a larger trellis as plant grows.



Info To Go

General Plant Care

Get more general guidance for how to care for plants in the shop, by clicking on the Info to Go logo on www.safnow.org. Or, call SAF's Fast Fax, (888) 723-2000 and request document #910.

Balloon Flower:

Keep the planting mix moist, but do not over water. Balloon flowers do best in bright, indirect light inside or full sun outside. Try not to disturb roots when transplanting this perennial plant. **Tips for customers:**

Appropriate for USDA zones

three to eight, balloon flowers should be fertilized once a month with a balanced water-soluble fertilizer.

Orange Star: Keep the planting mix moist to encourage continuing bud set and prevent dormancy. When displaying the plants in your shop, choose bright light. If you move them outside, place them in full sun or light shade. Store plants between 58°F and 62°F to maintain blooms — this plant will not tolerate frost. Remove spent flower spikes at the base. **Tips for customers:** When leaves die back, gradually withhold water and allow plant to dry out. Avoid summer watering. Plants will grow again with winter rains. Outside, the plants do best in USDA zones nine and 10.

Pink Echeveria: Water every two weeks, allowing the plant mix to dry out before each watering. Bright, indirect light is recommended inside. Outside, full sun is best. This plant thrives in USDA zones nine and 10. **Tips for customers:** Plant in a fast draining location with full sun. Do not fertilize.

Miniature Rose: To ensure maximum flowering and growth, choose full sunlight. Prune by a third after each flowering flush. **Tips for customers:** Although drought resistant after established, water the rose plants frequently after initial planting, during growing season and warm summer months. Protect plants in sub-zero climates by mounding soil and mulching. Roses planted in containers are vulnerable to freezing and should be protected or moved. Apply a balanced fertilizer to soil at planting and monthly during the growing season. Plant roses in well-drained, cultivated soil. Space plants 8 inches apart for good air circulation. 🌿



GIVE ME LIGHT Echeveria, or Hens and Chicks, likes bright, indirect light and water about every two weeks.

Photo by Nurserymen's Exchange

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