

Star-of-Bethlehem: Care Tips for the Florist

1. There are two main types of star-of-Bethlehem available to florists as cut flowers: the standard variety with whitish centers, and a bigger variety (chincerinchee) with black centers. Both have white petals.

2. As a bulb flower, the star-of-Bethlehem should be bought in the bud stage, before florets are fully opened, to allow for maximum vase life.

3. When stars-of-Bethlehem arrive in your shop, unpack them as soon as possible, loosen the stems and begin conditioning.

4. Cut off one to two inches from the bottoms of the stems and remove any foliage which will be underwater. Cutting the stems on the diagonal will facilitate water uptake.

5. Place the flowers in deep, warm water (100 to 110 degrees) and preservative and let stand until they gradually come to room temperature, a process that will take a couple of hours. Condition in high relative humidity (90 to 94 percent) in a cool, dark place.

6. Store the conditioned stars-of-Bethlehem in a solution of water and preservative in the refrigerator at a temperature of 40 to 50 degrees. Check water levels daily.

7. As florets on the stem wither and fade, remove them. New blossoms will open for as long as three weeks.

8. Once cut, stars-of-Bethlehem will continue to grow toward a source of light. To prevent this from happening, pinch off about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the tip of the flower cluster.

9. Like many bulb flowers, stars-of-Bethlehem are susceptible to damage from ethylene gas. They should be kept away from other flowers which produce quantities of this gas, and they should be protected from exhaust fumes from delivery vehicles.

10. Because of their size and numerous blossoms (common stars-of-Bethlehem grow to a height of nine to twelve inches and have twelve to twenty one-inch flowers on each stem), these flowers are ideal as single stems in bud vases. If you design an arrangement for a bud vase, don't pinch off the tip of the flower cluster. The flowers' bending toward the light will only add more interest to the overall appearance.

11. Stars-of-Bethlehem have exceptional lasting qualities. As such, they make a good choice for bridal work or corsages. Simply nip off each floret and use separately in your designs.

What to Tell Your Customers

1. Keep stars-of-Bethlehem well away from sources of drafts, either hot or cold, which will cause the flowers to lose too much water through rapid evaporation. Heat sources should also be avoided, including television sets, radiators and direct sunlight. Heat will cause premature wilting.

2. Check the water level of the arrangement every day. If the design has been put in floral foam, press down on the foam to see if it's moist. If more water must be added, mix it with floral preservative, available from your florist. Simply follow package instructions for correct application.