

## Test Your Care IQ

By Gay Smith

LAST SEPTEMBER, DURING SAF LAKE LAS VEGAS 2005, SAF hosted a care-and-handling session modeled after the popular game show “Jeopardy!”. The session blew away naysayers who view care-and-handling education as, well, not exactly the most exciting topic, or downright dull. Team competition was intense as questions and answers flew around the room.

Now, see how you and your staff stack up. Put these questions — but not the answers — in front of your staff, and see just how well trained they are. (To get a worksheet with only the questions for your staff, see Info to Go). Want more questions? Next month, test your skills in round two.

**Question: How much foliage should be removed prior to packing in solution?**

**Answer:** To keep bacteria in check, remove foliage below the solution level. Remove damaged foliage for aesthetics, but don’t go overboard because flowers (especially roses) need foliage to help pump solution up stems into blooms.

**Q: Our poinsettias just arrived. The soil is moist, but the plants are droopy. Should I call my supplier for credit?**

**A:** Not yet. Epinasty, the downward bending of the petioles of leaves that happens when poinsettias are sleeved, may be the problem. People mistake epinasty for dehydration, but it can happen with moist soil. The problem often corrects itself in 24 hours.

**Q: True or false: Fungi and mold are sources of ethylene.**

**A:** True. Bacteria, yeast, fungi and mold give off ethylene as they develop. So dump those funky buckets promptly. Other ethylene sources include cigarette smoke, combustion engines, rotting green trash, some fruits and flowers, Douglas fir, heat-

stressed eucalyptus, fumes from rising bread (yeast) and decorative mosses (which are fungi).

**Q: Are carbonated clear sodas, vodka, pennies, aspirin and vitamin C as effective as flower food solution?**

**A:** No. All of the above have elements that may help flower life, but it is the proper ratio of ingredients in commercial flower food (acidifier, biocides and nutrients) that improves vase performance.

**Q: True or false: There is a plant-growth regulator that can prevent stem elongation of cut tulips.**

**A:** True. Two compounds (Floral and BVBPlus) prevent tulip stretch and are used at the farm level as post-harvest treatments.

**Q: True or false: Adding decorative picks, pods, painted foliages, wheat and cattails, broom bloom, etc., does not affect the cleanliness of a solution.**

**A:** False. The pollution level becomes higher faster in buckets when bouquets with any of the above additions, compared to solutions holding only bouquets with flowers and foliage for the same amount of time.

### Pass, Fail

How did you do? Use this scale to find out:

- A: Five or six correct answers (Very good, smarty-pants! Take a week off.)
- B: Four correct answers (You’re a good flower handler! Keep reading Floral Management for updates and refreshers.)
- C: Three correct answers (Turn off your iPod and pay attention. Read the instructions before you mix solutions.)
- D: Two correct answers (Sorry. At this rate, you’ll be washing buckets forever.)
- E: One or zero correct answers (Consider a different career possibility — or get going on care-and-handling research.) 🌿

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**Editor’s Note:** How did your staff do on the care-and-handling quiz? Let Floral Management editors know and you could be eligible for a prize from the SAF Market. E-mail your scores to [fm@safnow.org](mailto:fm@safnow.org).



### Info To Go

#### Handout Help

Get a worksheet with the questions from this month’s column, but not the answers, by clicking on the Info to Go logo on SAF’s member Web site, [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org). Or, get it via Fast Fax by calling (888) 723-2000 and requesting document #745.