

Care and Handling



THE BEST QUARTER AND DIME YOU'LL SPEND See the dramatic difference in flowers treated in a hydration solution (top photo) and then moved to a flower food solution vs. those placed directly in water. Using a commercial solution costs about 35 cents.

TWO STEPS TO LONG-LASTING HYDRANGEAS

➤ Cold water bath, hot water bath, remove the outer layer of the stem: These are just a few suggestions I've heard for making hydrangeas last longer and not droop. The problem is that these are labor intensive, they don't benefit the other flowers in the arrangement and the outcome is never consistent. So rather than search for home remedies, there are two post-harvest products that will work every time and benefit every flower. Even better, both can be used for less than 35 cents an arrangement.

No More Droopy Blooms

Hydrangeas have a potential vase life of more than two weeks, but they are very sensitive to poor care and handling. The beauty of a hydrangea is easily found in its large, round flower (technically called an "inflorescence"), made up of several clusters of individual flowers. These large flowers can easily become dehydrated, however, causing them to quickly wilt and the petals to turn brown.

The "trick" is chemistry and it is very repeatable. Most importantly, hydrangea, with its soft and very turgid nature, must be kept hydrated and properly fed. Floralife® Hydraflor® 100 Hydration Postharvest Treatment is a hydration solution that allows flowers to properly hydrate after a period of dry transport. (Other postharvest companies, including Chrysal and Syndicate Sales, also offer hydration solutions; my information is based solely on Floralife's.) This solution improves the flow of liquids through the flower stems by clearing air and natural compounds blocking stem cell and passageways. Generally, this hydration solution is used by the wholesaler when processing. If you are uncertain if your wholesaler has used a hydration solution, be sure to ask.

At the retail level, florists can incorporate a very simple step to extend flower life and make sure hydrangeas get proper hydration. Floralife Quick Dip is an instant hydration and pretreat-

ment solution to use in the shop. Simply remove the foliage that will be below the water level in the container, put a fresh cut on the stem and dip two inches of the stem in Quick Dip. The solution is pre-mixed and can be used until it becomes cloudy and contaminated. Do not pour the solution back in the bottle after use.

Finally, make sure flowers are inserted into floral foam that has been soaked in flower food or placed in vases with flower food for a proper pH level to inhibit bent neck and keep stems' "plumbing" free flowing.

These pretreatment solutions are highly effective with all flower types, but when you have a very thirsty flower like the hydrangea, a hydration solution combined with flower food is the best investment in flower life. 🌸

Jacque Sir Louis is marketing manager at Smithers-Oasis. jsirlouis@smithersoasis.com.