

## White Blooms that Sparkle

By Cindy Hoogasian

BEAUTIFUL WHITE BLOSSOMS (SUCH AS THOSE ON p. 16) make an elegant statement in a monotone bouquet or provide contrast in a multi-colored arrangement. But improper post-harvest care can discolor and age white flowers. Keeping them in top condition is a challenge, but adhering to basic steps should help you rise to the task.

In addition to proper processing (see Info to Go), florists and industry experts recommend these tips for working with these cultivars:

**Gardenia:** To prevent bruising, J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of JMHS Enterprises in Comstock Park, Mich., suggests wetting your hands with water or Clear Crowing Glory before handling gardenias. To keep blooms moist in designs, Schwanke says to cover the bloom with an unscented, lotion-free facial tissue. Spray the tissue with water and place the tissue-covered flower in a plastic bag. Return the blooms or arrangement to the cooler for storage. Remove the tissue before presenting the flowers to the recipient.

**Calla:** When ordering callas, specify tight or open blooms, depending on how soon they will be used in design, says Charles F. Kremp 3rd, AAF, of Kremp Florist in Philadelphia. To open tight blooms, submerge flower heads in warm water, which softens them enough to peel them back. Schwanke suggests cutting a circle from a roll of cotton and pushing the cotton down around the spadix to force the spathe open. He also notes that applying baby powder to the flower and brushing off the excess with a chenille stem can disguise minor imperfections. To straighten bent stems, Kremp places boxed, banded bunches of callas in his cooler upside down. "I have no idea why it works, but it does," he says.

**Gerbera:** Suspend gerberas by the flower head in a shallow (2-inch deep) solution of fresh flower food, after stems are re-cut. If the flowers aren't threaded through a cardboard tray, make a chicken-wire cage atop a deep bucket and hang the flowers through the wire. Gerberas are fluoride sensitive, so don't use fluoridated water in processing. Gerberas like a low pH of 3.5-4.5, Schwanke



### Info To Go

#### Back to Basics

For more processing guidance, read "Back to Basics," from the May 2005 issue of *Floral Management*, also available 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 #711.

### Extra Care

SAF's "Flower & Plant Care: The 21st Century Approach" includes more than 200 pages of supplemental care and processing techniques for more than 100 cut flowers and greens. Reference charts, checklists and new information on processing flowers, temperature control and ethylene make this a "must have" for your business. Members pay \$29.95 for the manual, \$39.95 for the CD-ROM or \$54.95 for both. Non-members pay \$44.95 for the manual, \$59.99 for the CD-ROM or \$79.95 for both. For more information, visit the SAF Market at [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org).

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says. High pH levels promote petal shattering. Specially blended gerbera nutrient is available.

**Lisianthus:** Don't get water on lisianthus blooms or leaves, because the flower is susceptible to *Botrytis*. Remove the plastic sleeve immediately and loosen the bunch to promote good air circulation, Schwanke says.

**Anemone:** These stems may curve, like a gerbera stem, if you don't take steps to keep them straight. Suspend anemones from a chicken-wire frame or wrap them tightly to keep the stems straight during hydration. Anemones are susceptible to the sap emitted by daffodils, so don't place them in a vase with daffodils unless the sap has stopped flowing. Inspect for *Botrytis* when processing.

**Oriental Lily:** Lily leaves sometimes turn yellow before the flowers finish blooming, so choose a floral nutrient with a lower amount of sugar (sugar promotes yellowing of these leaves). Schwanke has a tip for opening lilies in tight bud: Cut the stems underwater, and then lay the stems on the counter for an hour, creating water stress. Re-cut the stems and place the flowers in a warm nutrient solution or warm water. The blooms will open faster. Remove pollen stains on flowers (any flower) by spraying the flower profusely with clear Crowing Glory, which washes away pollen, Schwanke says. It removes pollen stains from hands too.

**Limonium:** Be careful of *Botrytis*, which commonly affects this flower. Some types of limonium have an unpleasant odor. Kremp suggests spraying bunches with floral-scented Febreze to disguise the odor. 🌸

**Cindy Hoogasian** is co-author of "In Season," a post-harvest care book. She has been widely published in industry publications and has written numerous articles on the care and handling of flowers from the retail florist's perspective.