



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station



Cutting Gardens

Creating Cut Flower
Arrangements

&

Flowers Tips & Suggestions

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A photograph of a white wrought-iron chair with a wicker basket filled with pink and purple flowers. The text "Growing a Cut Flower Garden" is overlaid on the image in a large, black, serif font with a white outline.

Growing a Cut Flower Garden

"Picture yourself surrounded by the beauty of freshly arranged flowers and dreaming of growing your gorgeous collection of cut flowers in your garden. This helpful guide has great tips and strategies for creating charming floral arrangements. It's also full of suggestions for easy-to-grow annual and perennial flowers that are perfect for cutting and arranging. Happy gardening!"



*"Let's make beautiful flower
arrangements using the flowers
from your garden! 🌸"*

If you derive pleasure from adorning your living space with vibrant, freshly picked flower arrangements, or if you derive joy from using them as a means of uplifting the spirits of your nearest and dearest friends, colleagues, or even strangers, then creating a unique and personal flower arrangement from the blooms in your garden could truly make a difference. Whether you have a dedicated cutting garden, lush flower beds, or an assortment of containers dotting your home, you have a wealth of resources to create awe-inspiring foliage arrangements. By artfully merging a medley of seasonal leaves, blossoms, and branches, you open a world of unknown creative opportunities, enabling you to fashion stunning arrangements effortlessly.



Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

CONDITIONING & CARE



To ensure that your flowers have the longest possible vase life, it is important to take several steps to prepare the stems for arrangement. It's crucial to remember that different types of flowers have varying lengths of vase life.

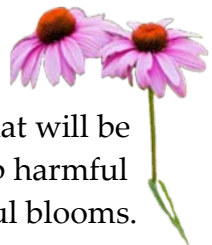
Maintaining the cleanliness of the vase and water is important, as this can significantly impact the longevity of your flowers.

Cut



Before you start arranging your beautiful flowers, cutting the stems at a sharp angle using floral snips is important. This angled cut ensures that the bottom of the stem doesn't sit flat against the base of the container, which is crucial for allowing the plant to draw up more water.

Strip



Be sure to remove any leaves, thorns, or berries that will be underwater in the vase. This simple step will keep harmful bacteria at bay and extend the life of your beautiful blooms.

Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

Hydrate



After you've cut the flowers, let them rest in a bucket of water before you start arranging them. To boost the flowers, you can add plant food to the water. This will help the stems soak up the water and keep the flowers looking fresh and beautiful when you put them in a vase.

Replenish

Remember, after enjoying your lovely flower arrangement for a few days, you might notice the water getting cloudy. Don't worry; change the water in the vase every 3-4 days with fresh warm water. This will give the flowers a little pick-me-up.





Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

CHOOSE A CONTAINER

Always remember that anything can be a container if it can be made watertight!

The first step in creating a beautiful floral arrangement is choosing the perfect container. Consider the mood or style you want to express and the flowers available. Let's look at different types of containers and the best flowers to complement them.



Footed Containers: Urns & footed bowls are wonderful for natural-style floristry.

Mugs & Pitchers: Glazed ceramic mugs and pitchers offer diverse shapes and colors, making them ideal for showcasing a simple bunch of flowers. Their domestic appeal adds a charming touch to any floral arrangement.



Tall and narrow containers: A large jar's perfectly proportioned cylindrical shape elegantly showcases the beauty of tall, spire-shaped flowers, creating a striking visual display that captures the eye and brings a sense of natural elegance to any space.

Creating Cut Flower Arrangements



CREATE SUPPORT



Preparing the flower container is the initial step in the arrangement process. Many containers require assistance to secure the stems and achieve a casual, natural appearance.



Chicken-wire ball: Using chicken wire, create a spherical frame. This frame will enable you to design lush arrangements with an open, airy feel, leaving ample space between the stems for a beautifully abundant look.

Tape lattice: When adding stability to a container, consider constructing a lattice-like support system using clear tape. Start by placing two or more parallel lines of tape across the container's opening. Then, add two more lines of tape perpendicular to the first set, creating a crisscross pattern.



Floral pin holders: Put a metal pin holder into the bottom of the container and push the base of the flower stems onto the pins.

Creating Cut Flower Arrangements



CHOOSE YOUR FLOWERS

When picking flowers for your arrangements, look for different textures, like spiky thistle next to silky petals. Before you decide on the color, think about the shape and form. Follow these steps to ensure a nice balance of shapes, textures, and colors in your arrangements:



Choose your primary focal flower: These flowers will take center stage and are typically eye-catching in color, shape, or size, like dahlias, sunflowers, or tulips.

Combine focal flowers: Once you've selected your primary focal flower, consider choosing several secondary focal flowers that harmonize or contrast with its shape, color, and texture.



Add a final flourish: Select your final flourish flowers thoughtfully, as they will beautifully complement your focal flowers. Think of small daisy shapes, elegant grasses, or stunning umbel-shaped flowers.



Choose foliage: Plenty of foliage is important for a bountiful and lush arrangement. Choose a woody framework, filler, and decorative foliage like red-leaf roses, jasmine, eucalyptus, or honeysuckle.



Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

POSITION THE FOLIAGE

The foliage is the first step in creating an arrangement. It shapes the arrangement and provides a background for the flowers. The leaves add texture and beauty to the arrangement.

Create the framework: Let's start by working on the framework foliage. Use the longest and sturdiest branches to outline the highest and widest points of the composition. It's a great way to start and make your creation stand out!



Add the filler foliage: Fill in the space between the woody framework branches with shorter stems to add fullness to the main body.

Add a decorative touch: Let the plants sit naturally in the container, allowing them to arch or trail. This will create a beautiful contrast in color and texture with the rest of the foliage.



Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

PLACE THE FOCAL FLOWERS



Next, you'll want to add the focal flowers. Take cues from how flowers naturally grow to ensure everything looks nice together. Also, consider where the arrangement will be placed and how people will see it from different angles.

Place the larger focal flowers: Arrange your beautiful flowers with care. Start by placing the tallest ones first, then work your way down. Make sure to support heavy-headed flowers by gently resting them on the container rim or foliage stems.

Place the contrasting focal flowers: Position spire-shaped focal flowers with vibrant colors and long, elegant stems contrasting with the intricate framework foliage. Place them along the curving lines of the foliage to create a striking visual impact.

Place the smaller focal flowers: Utilize the smaller focal flowers to gracefully fill the spaces around the main flowers, arranging them at different angles and depths.



Creating Cut Flower Arrangements

ADD A FINAL FLOURISH

Adding the finishing flourish is the most crucial stage in the art of floral arranging. During this pivotal phase, wispy and textural stems are thoughtfully placed to infuse the composition with a sense of graceful movement, elevating the supporting blooms to a new level of visual allure and artistry.



Create a sense of movement: Make sure to keep the stems long so that the flowers extend out beyond the main body of the arrangement, creating a lovely and natural look.

Add a “pop” of color: Incorporate the most vibrant finishing touches with colorful stems to bring extra life to the green areas throughout the arrangement. This will make the whole design pop!





Flower Tips

Simple ways of growing cut flowers

Please follow the university's recommended educational process fact sheets to ensure the best support. Additionally, here are some great tips and suggestions for cutting gardens!



FROM SEEDS/BULBS:



Remember this: You have the power to plant seeds or bulbs directly into the soil, start your seeds indoors before the last frost, or plant them in succession to get a head start. Find the best spot for your garden. Most cut flowers need a lot of sunshine, so keep that in mind when determining where to plant.

ANNUALS & PERENNIALS:

In a cut flower garden, it's important to carefully choose a lovely variety of annual and perennial flowers to guarantee a continuous display of blooms all season long. **Annual** flowers,

while they only last for one season, offer us a profusion of blossoms, while **Perennials**, though their bloom time is limited, reliably come back year after year.



Flower Tips

SHRUBS:

Using the vibrant and diverse blooms of flowering shrubs in your cut flower arrangements is an excellent way to expand and enhance the beauty of your seasonal displays. Flowering shrubs offer an array of captivating cut flowers, suitable for both creating delicate posies and making striking, dramatic floral presentations. Whether you have hydrangeas, roses, spirea, flowering quince, forsythia, or other flowering shrubs in your garden, you can look forward to a bountiful and stunning assortment of blooms to fill your vases.



Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Anemone

Anemone coronaria



Direct sow corms
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when fully open
Will continue to grow up in a vase
Disks shape in the vase

Baby's Breath

Gypsophila elegans



Direct sow in cool weather
Single stem per seed
Vase life 5-10 days
Harvest when 60% open
Airy element in an arrangement

Bachelor's Buttons

Centaurea cyanus



Direct sow in September for early spring flower
without cover or early spring
Vase life 6-10 days
Harvest when 1/3 of flowers have bloomed
Airy element in an arrangement

Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Canterbury Bells

Campanula medium



Sow indoors according to the seed packet

Vase life 10 to 14 days

Harvest when few flowers are in bloom

Spike element to the arrangement

Bupleurum

Bupleurum rotundifolium



Direct sow

Single stem per seed

Vase life 7-10 days

Harvest when fully open

Filler flower

Columbine

Aquilegia vulgaris



Perennial 365 days to flower

Vase life 6-8 days

Harvest 1/3 flowers open

Airy element in an arrangement

Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Chinese Forget-Me-Not

Cynoglossum amabile



Direct sow in September or early spring
Vase life 5-7 days
Harvest 1/4 of flowers on stem are open
Airy element in an arrangement

Cress

Lepidus sativum



Direct sow in early spring
Single stem per seed
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when seed pods form
Airy elements & can be dried

Feverfew

Tanacetum parthenium



Sow indoors according to the seed packet
Plant seedlings outside after hardened off
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when 1/4 flowers open
Filler flower

Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Foxglove

Digitalis purpurea



Perennial

Vase life 6-8 days

Harvest when few flowers are in bloom

Spike element in the arrangement

Forsythia

Forsythia x intermedia



Perennial

Vase life of 7-14 days

Harvest foliage of filler or flowers when buds are large

Daffodils

Narcissus



Perennial

Vase life 7-10 days

Harvest when stem shaped like a gooseneck

Stems need to be conditioned for 4 hours

before adding other flowers with daffodils

Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Buttercups

Ranunculus ssp.



Plant in early spring outside, according to the packet instructions

Vase life 7-10 days

Harvest when buds are squishy like a marshmallow

Focal flower

Snapdragons

Antirrhinum majus



Start seeds indoors according to the seed packet instructions

Plant outside after hardening off

Vase life 7-10 days

Harvest when bottom flowers bloom

Spike element

Stock

Matthiola incana



Start seeds indoors

Plant outside after hardening off

Single stem per seed

Vase life 7-10 days

Harvest when flowers open on the stem

Spring Flower Tips & Suggestions

Sweet Pea

Lathyrus odoratus



Direct sow outdoors or indoors
Pinch when 12 inches high need a trellis
Vase life 5 days
Harvest when at least two unopened buds
Fragrant flower

Sweet William

Dianthus barbatus



Sow according to the seed packet
Vase life 14 days
Harvest when a couple of flowers open
on the stem

Tulip

Tulipa gesneriana



Perennial
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when in the bud stage

Summer Flower Tips & Suggestions

Basil

Ocimum basilicum



Start indoors
Plant outside after hardening off and danger of frost
Pinch plant at about 9 inches
Vase life is 7-10 days.
Harvest when the stem is tough, and the flower begins to form
Filler flower

Black-eyed Susan

Rudbeckia fulgida



Perennial
Will bloom the first year if planted in early spring
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when the flower begins to bloom
Disk element

Purple Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea



Perennial
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when petals around the cone

Summer Flower Tips & Suggestions

Dahlia

Dahlia pinnata



Direct sow tubers after danger of frost
Pinch when about 9 inches to produce side branches
Needs support
Vase life 5 days
Harvest when 3/4 bloomed
Focal flower

Gladiolus

Gladiolus ssp.



Plant corms outside according to the packet
Needs support netting works the best
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when 3-4 flowers on bottom in bloom

Marigold

Tagetes erecta



Plant outdoors after danger of frost
Needs support needing and/or corraling
Vase life 7-10 days

Summer Flower Tips & Suggestions



Sunflower

Helianthus annuus

Direct sow according to packet
Vase life 7-10 days
Harvest when the first petal appears
Focal Flower

Benary Giant Zinnia

Zinna elegans



Sow indoors or direct sow doesn't like roots disturbed
Plant outdoors after danger of frost
Vase life 7- 10 days
Harvest when the stem is firm
Focal flower

Stonecrop

Sedum ssp.



Plant sedums in spring after the danger of frost has passed
Clumping hybrids grow 1 to 3 feet tall
Flowers from summer until fall
Sedum has an exceptional vase life, sometimes lasting for weeks on end.

Summer Flower Tips & Suggestions

Hydrangeas



Lacecap, Oakleaf, Panicle, Climbing, Smooth, and Large-leafed Varieties

Hydrangeas' sturdy stems make great cut flowers for vases and arrangements. Pick them when they are just starting to go papery and lose color.

Hybrid Tea Rose

Rose ssp.



Creating beautiful floral arrangements using a bountiful garden of roses is an absolute delight. There are different varieties and the possibilities are endless.

Peonies

Paeonia officinalis



Perennial

Peonies are great for flower arrangements. They change size, shape, and color while in a vase, and many types have a lovely scent that can fill a room.







REFERENCES

Siegfried, Rachel *The Flower Book*. Penguin, 7 Feb 2017.
The book provides an abundance of valuable information and resource materials. Rachel thoroughly explores the art of creating stunning flower arrangements, covering all types of flowers and their seasonal availability.

Images provided by Liyannys Feliz, Megan Matthews, and online sources.

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