# How to Make Fresh Flowers Last Longer

**Place flowers in water as soon as possible**. Once the stems of flowers have been cut, you have removed their life support system.

**Fill a plastic bucket a third to half way with warm water**. Warm water should be used as flowers take up warm water more readily than cold. Its preferable to add preservative to the water. (The use of preservatives is explained further on). Flowers only drink through the ends of the stems and not through the sides of the stems, and for this reason buckets should not be filled right up to the top with water, as foliage left on stems below the water line will rot and pollute the water. This will feed bacteria and the flowers will die more quickly. The foliage of marigolds, chrysanthemums, stock and daisies send off a particularly strong odor when left standing under water over a period of time.

**Take the bucket of water into the garden with you**. Use a sharp pair of secateurs and cut the flower stems on an angle - a slanted cut allows a better intake of water. Remove all foliage from the lower portion of the stems which would stand under the water line. Place the flowers immediately in the water.

**Avoid overcrowding flowers**. Allow enough air to circulate between each flower. Too many flowers crowded together in a bucket may cause the petals to become squashed and bruised. Place the bucket in a cool dark place and allow the flowers to have a long drink before being arranged. When picking short-stemmed flowers, use a smaller container.

**Allow flowers to have a good drink for four to five hours, preferably overnight before arranging**. This step is called conditioning. It allows the stems to fill up with water and the flowers will become crisp. These flowers will last twice as long as those that have not been conditioned properly.

**Use a flower preservative to destroy bacteria in the water**. Flower preservatives are available. Another alternative is to use a capful of household bleach in the water. If a preservative is not used, the water needs to be changed and the stems cut on an angle daily. If a preservative is used, the stems do not require recutting and water needs changing only about twice a week. Flowers like freesias, spray carnations and liliums have lots of buds. By using a preservative in the water, it helps develop the buds to open.

**Best to condition** different species of flowers separately. Condition the flowers first. Then make your arrangement. Replace the water with the same type of conditioned water, if practical, 5 hours later and daily after that.

**Bacteria can live on for months in a dry vase so it is crucial that you clean your vases with soap and hot water and a few drops of bleach.**

# Conditioning Make Fresh Flowers Last Longer

Fill a hollow stemmed flower with water and plug with a small wad of cotton. This will keep the stem firm and hold the cut flower upright. Soft stemmed flowers are usually from bulbs. Cut at the green portion, just above the white and place in cold water. Woody stems like to be split rather than crushed. A clean split allows for more surface area. Sappy or milky stems ooze sap into the vase clogging the cuts of the other flowers. To avoid this, dip the cut end of a milky stem in boiling water or use a flame on the cut part of the stem for 30 seconds. A diagonal cut is all that's needed for solid stemmed flowers.

For cut flower arrangements to last as long as possible, add some things to the water to increase their life. Lengthen cut flower freshness by a few easy ways other than water additions, such as making daily water changes and keeping the flowers away from a hot or cold air vent.

**Soda**

Putting ¼ cup of clear soda into vase water can extend flower life. It will make blooms last longer.

**Apple Cider Vinegar**

Adding 2 tbsp. of sugar with 2 tbsp. of apple cider vinegar can help extend cut flower life. Make sure the water is changed daily and add a new batch of vinegar and sugar each time.

**Vodka**

An antibacterial, adding a few drops of vodka (or any clear spirit)to the flower's water can help kill bacteria growth in the water. Adding a teaspoon of sugar can provide the flower with nutrients.

**Sugar**

Sugar is a key ingredient in several of these homemade flower extending formulas because it acts like a preservative. Mix 3 tbsp. with 2 tbsp. of white vinegar in a quart of water for a versatile mixture.

**Aspirin**

Crushed aspirin can add to flower life and keep blooms open longer before wilting. Change water every couple of days with a new crushed aspirin added each time.

**Penny**

Adding a penny to the water adds copper and with the addition of a sugar cube, it will help add nutrients to the water and keep the flowers living longer

**Bleach**

Freshly cut flowers will stay fresh longer if you add 1/4 teaspoon bleach per quart (1 liter) of vase water. Another popular recipe calls for 3 drops bleach and 1 teaspoon sugar in 1 quart (1 liter) water. This will also keep the water from getting cloudy and inhibit the growth of bacteria.