

Tips to extend the life of Valentine's Day roses

Many people receive Valentine's Day gifts from loved ones, especially roses, but the holiday's favorite flower often declines shortly after Feb. 14. Kansas State University horticulture expert Matthew McKernan offers guidelines to extend the life of floral arrangements and cut flowers.

"For floral arrangements, keep the vase filled or floral foam soaked with water," McKernan said. "Add fresh water daily and if the water turns cloudy, replace it immediately."

McKernan suggests recutting flower stems every time water is replaced by removing 1-2 inches with a sharp knife, scissors or garden pruner to allow the stem to continue drawing water.

"Keep flowers in a cool spot (65 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit), away from direct sunlight, heating or cooling vents, directly under ceiling fans, or near radiators," McKernan said.

When arranging cut flowers, begin by filling a clean, deep vase with water and add the flower food obtained from your florist.

"Remove leaves that will be below the waterline. Leaves in water will promote bacterial growth, which will dirty water and shorten flower life," McKernan said. "Stems should be cut at a 45-degree angle immediately before putting them in water to further extend the life of the bouquet."

If you cannot get flowers in a food solution right away, keep them cool, he added.

McKernan and his colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/horticulture-newsletter>

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