




Flowers
for cutting

arranging flowers

You can choose to display your flowers either in a formal arrangement or massed in your favourite vase.

informal arrangements

A silver vase filled with purple flowers, likely snapdragons, arranged in a formal style. The flowers are tall and have a single stem with multiple buds.

Make sure you choose the correct vase for the height of your flowers - tall flowers look striking when placed in a tall vase, while a smaller open necked vase can provide an attractive display for a collection of single variety smaller flowers, as the blooms will spread out and present a mass of colour. Single bud vases will display small amounts of delicate flowers with a gentle elegance.

Cut stems to about twice the height of the vase, leaving some an inch or two longer for the centre of the display. Start at the outside and work in, trying to criss-cross the stems in the vase as this will provide support for the other flowers in the display. Finish off with the slightly higher blooms.



formal arrangements

Start by thoroughly soaking some oasis in cut flower solution. Choose a shape that you wish to achieve, then begin to build up your display one flower at a time.

Flowers can be divided into 3 types:

- **Line flowers** - tall stems with blooms that grow up the stalk, e.g. antirrhinum, delphinium, moluccella
- **Mass flowers** - give a display bulk or mass, they are usually single headed flowers such as gerbera, roses, tulips, daffodils.
- **Filler flowers** - normally stems with lots of little flowers e.g. statice, gypsophila

Think about each flower as you add it to the display, considering how it will add to the shape of the finished arrangement. Try to spread each flower out throughout the display and also make sure the flower faces outwards and at the correct angle. Once you are pleased with the overall shape and density of the flowers then fill in with any greenery you may wish to use.

preserving flowers

drying flowers

Drying flowers that you have grown yourself provides a cheap and easy way of providing year long decoration to your home. Arrangements last a long time and are simple to care for - just give them a little dust!

when to pick flowers for drying

You can pick flowers at anytime during their growing season, try to choose the best specimen, avoiding those damaged in any way. Choose flowers that are free of dew or rain but not yet wilted from the midday sun. Always pick more than you think you need to allow for damage during the drying process.

Remember you can dry not just flowers but also leaves, grasses and any seed pods that will make an interesting addition to a floral arrangement.

air drying

Always choose blooms that are not fully open, as when air drying flowers they continue to open as they dry. You will find that yellow, orange and blue toned flowers retain their colour best when dried.

Choose a warm dark place such as a cupboard under the stairs, attic or garage - it is important that it has good air circulation. It will be impossible to dry flowers successfully anywhere that is damp or in direct sunlight.

Remove leaves from stem, as these do not tend to dry well. Group the stems together and tie firmly with a rubber band as the stems will shrink during the drying process. Hang upside down in the warm, dry, dark place. Leave until thoroughly dry - normally this takes around 2 - 3 weeks. When the stem breaks easily then the flower is ready. If you are drying flowers with large heads then it is best to dry these individually as bunching them may damage the flower heads.

drying by burying

Burying flowers in a desiccating material is considered by many to be the best method of drying flowers. Cut the flower stem to about 1 inch and put in a container already filled with about an inch of desiccating material. Gently fill the container with material till the flower is covered by about an inch. Take care not to pour the material on the petals as this will distort the flower shape, fill around the flower head and gently tap the container until the granules gradually surround the bloom. Cover the container with an airtight lid or wrap well in cling film. Leave to dry for about a week before removing from container.

There are many different mediums you can use to dry flowers using the burying method. The simplest to use is silica gel. This granular mixture can easily be bought from hobby shops or garden centres. It can be reused by drying in the oven to remove all moisture absorbed.

microwave drying

This method of drying is a lot quicker than traditional methods and also leaves flowers looking fresher and more colourful. Dry the flowers individually by putting on a microwavable container, surrounded and supported by silica gel and place a cup of water in the microwave to help keep the atmosphere within the oven moist. Drying time will vary from around 1 minute for smaller flowers to 3 minutes for larger ones. As the power of microwaves vary it is best to experiment with each new flower type attempted.

Leave the flowers, surrounded by the silica gel, to dry and cool for 12 - 24 hours. Fix the flowers by spraying with hair spray, this will stop them absorbing moisture from the air.

If the flower stem is too short or too fragile to support its own weight then you will need to create wire stems. Do this by simply threading a loop of florist wire through the flower head (make a small hook at the top) and pull gently back though. Hide the wire by wrapping in green floral tape.

Flowers for air drying

Alliums	Gypsophila	Helichrysum	Hydrangeas
Larkspur	Nigella	Statice	Moluccella (Bells of Ireland)

Flowers for drying by burying

Anemone	Aster	Calendula	Chrysanthemum
Dahlia	Daisy	Gypsophila	Pansy
Rose	Zinnia		

Flowers for microwave drying

Chrysanthemum	Cosmos	Delphinium	Gerbera
Hydrangea	Rose	Zinnia	



hardy annuals

Sow the seed thinly direct into a finely raked, moist, warm soil where the plants are to flower. Thin the seedlings in stages to the required distance.



	SOW	HEIGHT	FLOWERING
Agrostemma	late March - Late May	90-120cm (3-4')	June - August
Calendula	mid March - May	30-60cm (1-2')	late June - September
Clarkia	mid March - May	60-75cm (24-30")	June - September
Cornflower	mid March - May	75-90cm (30-36")	mid June - September
Dimorphotheca	mid March - May	30cm (12")	mid June - September
Godetia	March - April	30-75cm (12-30")	July - August
Gypsophila	mid March - May	45cm (30")	June - Mid September
Larkspur	March - May	45-120cm (30-48")	June - Mid September
Love Lies Bleeding	April - May	75cm (30")	July - September
Nigella	mid March - May	38-45cm (15-18")	July - Mid September
Salvia horminum (Clary)	March - May	45cm (18")	June - September
Sweet pea	September - October	180cm (6')	mid May - August
	January - February	180cm (6')	June - September
Sunflower	April - May	60-240cm (2-8')	July - October
Zinnia	April - May	60-70cm (24-28")	July - September

half hardy annuals

The seeds should be sown at the appropriate temperature in a heated greenhouse, conservatory or indoors. Use clean pots or trays and a good quality multipurpose or John Innes seed compost.



	SOW	TEMPERATURE	HEIGHT	FLOWERING
Antirrhinum	mid January - mid April	15-20°C (60-68°F)	45-90cm (18-36")	Mid June -Mid October
Artotis	February - April	16-18°C (61-64°F)	30-38cm (12-15")	July - October
Aster	March - May	18-21°C (65-70°F)	45-75cm (18-30")	August - Mid October
Carnation	January - March	15-20°C (60-68°F)	38cm (15")	July - September
Cosmos	February - March	16°C (61°F)	60-90cm (24-36")	July - September
Helichrysum	Mid March - mid May	13-16°C (55-61°F)	105-120cm (42-48")	Mid June - September
Moluccella	February - early April	13-16°C (55-61°F)	60cm (24")	August - September
Phlox	February - April	15-20°C (60-68°F)	50cm (20")	June - September
Rudbeckia	January - mid April	15-20°C (60-68°F)	50-80cm (20-32")	July - October
Scabious	late March - May	6-12°C (43-54°F)	75cm (30")	July - September
Statice	February - March	15-20°C (60-68°F)	30-38cm (12-15")	July - September

hardy perennials

Sow the seed at the required temperature, in pots or trays using a good quality multipurpose compost or John Innes seed compost. Transfer the seedlings into 9cm (3½") pots when they are large enough to handle. As the plants develop further pot on into 13cm (5") pots. Plant out in the garden in autumn if they have put on sufficient growth otherwise plant out in the following spring.



SOW	TEMPERATURE	HEIGHT	FLOWERING	
Achillea	mid February - March	18-21°C (65-70°F)	60cm (24")	August - Mid October the same year
Alstroemeria	May - June	25°C (77°F)	90cm (36")	June - August the following year
Delphinium	Late Spring - early Summer	Cold Frame	150cm (5')	June - August the following year
Helenium	March - June	Cold Frame	120cm (48")	August - October the following year
Heuchera	April - June	Cold frame	75-90cm (30-36")	June - August the following year
Lythrum	January - July	16-26°C (60-70°F)	60-90cm (24-36")	May - June the following year
Michaelmas Daisy	May - early July	Cold frame	75-90cm (30-36")	June - October the following year

handy hints and money saving tips

The ideal time to cut flowers is in the morning before the heat of the day.



Choose flowers with upright, firm heads that have just begun to open. Yellow, spotted or drooping leaves are signs of age.

Cut using a sharp knife rather than a pair of scissors as these can squeeze the stem too much.

Remove the foliage that will be below the water line. It will not only rot and look unsightly but the gas this produces shortens the life of the flowers above.



Try to trim flowers under lukewarm water. The stem will then immediately take up the warm water rather than filling up with air which might later block the water uptake.

Once cut, try to leave your flowers immersed in water in a cool dark place for a few hours before arranging. Always fill your vase with warm water.

Do not squeeze too many flowers into a vase. Your flowers will last longer if you allow good air circulation.



Keep displays away from direct sunlight or drafts - a cool room is ideal.

If you do not have any commercial cut flower food, lemonade diluted with water provides everything needed to extend the life of your flowers.

Remove old blossoms and change the water every other day.