*Flower Arranging Tips and Reminders*

 Key words: Plan, Container, Height, Support, Line, Focal Point, Filler, Foliage, Color

Flowers and plant material

* Choose your flowers carefully. Don't cut flowers too soon, or the buds will be underdeveloped and won't blossom.
* Look for blooms that are just starting to open, have firm stems, healthy leaves and erect, vibrant petals.
* Remove leaves that will be under water in the arrangement
* DO NOT remove all leaves along the stem length; the flowers require the leaves as part of their hydration process.
* Always be "gentle" during the removal of leaves, gashes or breaks in the stem surface are "open wounds" where bacteria may enter. Try using a soft, but impenetrable glove for the removal of rose thorns and foliage.
* Woody stems should be conditioned by cutting at a sharp angle, and then splitting the stem ends about 1”
* Hollow stems are notorious for air-lock. Cut these stems at an angle, turn upside down and fill hollow area with water and hold in with finger until placed down into the bucket of water.
* Milky stems (Poppies, Poinsettia), the milky substance called latex can be messy and irritating to the skin. Cut the stem ends and burn with a flame for a few seconds to seal them. Rinse under warm running water for a few seconds to remove any remaining latex.
* Bulbous Stems (Tulips, Daffodils, Hyacinth) Cut off entire white part at an angle and place in bucket with cool water.
* Any spring bulb flowers should be soaked in cool water, as warm water will make them open too quickly.
* Daffodil stems exude a poisonous sap when cut. Make sure that they are placed in a separate bucket if using them with your arrangements. It is probably best to not combine them with other flowers in an arrangement.
* Remove any flowers that with time look less than pristine, as this will keep the remaining flowers looking fresh.
* Keep flowers away from drafts, direct sunlight, and ripening fruits, which emit ethylene gas
* Any cut flower arrangement will last longer if it's kept cool; move to the fridge if possible.

Containers and Vases

* Never use flower food in crystal or metal containers as the acid in the flower food will react with metal (including the lead in crystal)
* The possibilities are endless but avoid plain metal containers (those without a protective plastic coating). Make sure the vase is clean, leak-proof, with a neck and water reservoir large enough for your flowers to fit comfortably. The height of your vase should be about half as tall as your flowers
* Use opaque vases instead of glass. They hide messy stems and quietly complement flowers.
* Subtly cover the rim of the vase with drooping material in order to make the flowers and vase appear as one unit.

Water

* Make sure there is water in the container before commencing the arrangement; otherwise the stem ends will dry.
* Change the water every day. You may also want to re-cut the ends once or twice over the course of the cut flowers' lifespan. Flowers such as lilies or daffodils will open in a day or two, gladiolus will open over the course of a week, and pussy willow or forsythia will bloom in one to three weeks.
* Fill the vase with ice water after the flowers have opened. Cold water slows down growth and will lengthen the cut flowers' lifespan.
* For an arrangement in floral foam, change the water every 3 days. Place the arrangement in the sink and add water until the vase overflows and the water runs clear. The life of the arrangement will be significantly extended by not exposing the stems to air
* Avoid using distilled water for your arrangements, because the lack of salt in the water pulls normal salts out of the plant cells.
* *Use warm (100 – 110 degree) clean water as most flowers take in warm water more efficiently than cold. The actual quality of water used in a vase plays a major role in a flowers life cycle as examples:*
	+ *Sodium -  Present in high concentrations in soft water, if softened using salt, is toxic to roses and carnations.*
	+ *Fluoride - Added to drinking water in many communities for dental health. While Fluoride may prevent cavities in the kids it is harmful to* [*gerbera*](https://www.growerdirect.com/gerbera)*,* [*gladiolus*](https://www.growerdirect.com/gladioli)*, and freesia.*
	+ *Minerals - In many areas drinking water is considered "hard" and contains high levels of minerals.  Dissolved minerals can and may block the flower stems ability to hydrate properly.*