

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



February 11, 2023

## Flowers and Plants Make Great Valentine's Day Gifts

Valentine's Day provides an opportunity to show your appreciation to the special person or people in your life with a gift. Flowers and plants lift spirits and bring happiness.

Traditional gifts for Valentine's Day are fresh-cut mixed flowers and roses. After receiving a beautiful floral arrangement, check the water level in the container. Fill it with warm water or, preferably, with water containing a floral preservative. Most floral preservatives contain sugar to supply food to the flowers, a material to acidify the water to discourage bacterial activity, a material to kill the bacteria found in the water and on plant material, and a material to reduce the rate of respiration or use of food. Many commercial floral preservatives are available at the florist or where fresh flowers are sold. Use preservatives as directed with warm water.

Repeated scientific testing has shown that putting aspirin in the water with cut flowers does not prolong their life. In fact, the life of most cut flowers is shortened by the use of aspirin.

To help the arrangement last, place it in a cool location in the room. Keep the arrangement away from heat sources such as heaters, furnace vents, direct sunlight, and

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

appliances. Place the flowers away from hot or cold drafts, especially from opening and closing doors.

Occasionally, after a day or two, you may find one of the roses drooping down with a bent stem. This is a heartbreaking sight! Before giving up on the rose, try to revive it.

To revive a rose, take it out of the arrangement and place it in a broad, shallow pan, sink, or bathtub with warm water, about 100 degrees F. Cut off one-half to one inch of stem from the end with a sharp knife or sharp shears while holding it under water to prevent air from getting into the water-conducting tissue of the stem. If an air bubble forms in the conducting tissue, the rose will not take up water and revive.

Then submerge the entire rose, flower, stem, and foliage, and let it lay in a pan, sink, or bathtub of warm water. After it has revived, which may take 20 minutes to an hour, remove it from the water and place it back into the arrangement.

Enjoy roses long after Valentine's Day by drying them. Dry them after the flowers open but before the petals start to fall. Hang them upside down by the stem in a dark place with good air circulation to prevent the color from fading. The leaves can be removed or left attached. Mix other dried flowers or fillers with the roses to make a beautiful, dried bouquet.

Another way to preserve roses and other flowers is to use the petals in potpourri. Scatter petals on a cookie sheet in an area with good air circulation and allow to dry. After the petals are dry, place them in a glass container. This makes a nice keepsake to display for a long time.

If you wished flowers lasted longer, try houseplants. A popular houseplant, which tolerates low light levels found in homes and offices, is the Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum* species).

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

It forms a clump of pretty green leaves with white, spoon-shaped flowers. Other plants which tolerate low light conditions include: Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema*), dumb cane (*Dieffenbachia*), *Dracaena*, *Philodendron*, snake plant (*Dracaena trifasciata*), arrow head plant (*Syngonium*), and zee zee plant (*Zamioculcas*).

Another plant gift is a container of cacti and/or succulents. Check the information attached to the container since light requirements vary with the plants in the collection. Generally, bright light is best. Look at the plant tag for watering information too. In general, let the soil go dry to the touch before watering.

The next suggestion is an air plant (*Tillandsia* spp.), which is an epiphyte and anchors itself to other plants but does not harm them. These unique plants are often displayed in glass globes, on top of gravel or moss, or attached with a wire to objects that are not damaged by water. Mist the plant with water once a week; avoid water puddling around the plant. Place it in a bright area with indirect light.

*Phalaenopsis* or moth orchid plants have flowers which last for several weeks to months. Do not cut the flower stalk back after blossoms fade because in a few months it may branch to form additional flowers. New plants may also develop on those flower stalks. Place them in an area receiving medium light.

For more information about houseplants and care of fresh flowers, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or at [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

**Annette's Tip:**

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Other suggestions for Valentine's Day gifts include seed packets of flowers to grow in the garden or a gift certificate to a local nursery for bedding plants and perennials. The gift certificate could be designated for their very own rose bush as well.

## **Upcoming Event:**

The Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service is hosting a four-part DIY Vegetable Gardening Series. The first session on "Growing Transplants" will be held at our office on Monday, February 13 at 1:00 p.m. and repeated that evening at 6:00 p.m. The topic will be growing transplants. We will discuss when to start transplants, basic materials, growing conditions needed, and growing a variety of vegetables. Other programs in the series include: "Raised Bed Gardening" on March 7, "Insect and Disease Scouting" on May 16, and "Mid-Season to Fall Growing and Harvesting" on June 27.

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