

What to do with Valentine's Day Flowers

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Many of you probably remember that my wife used to manage a flower shop. Which means that for the first 15 years of marriage I spent several days at Mother's Day and Valentine's Day at the flower shop. It was either that or I didn't see my wife for several days! Helping out in the backroom of the flower shop or spending days out on the delivery route, in all sorts of crazy weather, made for some wonderful memories and a great learning experience in so many different ways.

First of all, florists appreciate it if you order early. Early is not February 13th! If you were wanting to order flowers and haven't already ordered, you missed the early time frame. For future reference, early is 10 to 14 days ahead of Valentine's Day (or Mother's Day or prom or any of those flower intensive occasions!) If you go into a flower shop between now and the 14th, don't expect to be picky. Be prepared with several options. Wholesale flower orders for this Valentine's Day started a year ago. By the time you get to the 12th or the 13th, a florist just can't pick up a phone and order more roses. It just doesn't work that way.

When you place that order, give the florist all the information possible. An address is an absolute must and if it is a work address, include a home address as well. There's no way to predict exactly WHEN a delivery will be able to be made and sometimes delivery routes don't go as planned. If you want flowers delivered to a particular location at a particular time, you may want to deliver it yourself! Oh, if the delivery is to a home address and there is a dog loose in the yard, be sure to include that information. Trust me, it's really appreciated by delivery people!

The weather this year is looking pretty good. Ice storms, snow storms and bitterly cold are a problem. Cool weather generally doesn't hurt cut flowers, but freezing weather can. If you are taking flowers out side yourself, make sure they are wrapped with tissue. Then don't leave them in a car where the temperature will drop below freezing. Fortunately it doesn't look like this will be an issue this year.

On the other side of this equation is once you get the flowers to the recipient, how can you keep them looking their best for as long as possible? It is important to remember that flowers are living things and their biggest need is water. The water need is directly proportional to the number of stems in the water. The more flowers and greenery in the vase, the quicker it will use water. As soon as you receive the flowers, check the water level. I'm not sharing any deep dark secret here but sometimes vases of flowers tip over in delivery vans. It just happens. So check the vase as soon as you receive it and fill it up. Then check the water every day. If the water turns cloudy, dump it out and replace it. It sometimes can help if you take the flowers out, cut two inches off the stem (preferably underwater) and get them into fresh water immediately.

If you received loose flowers, get them into water as soon as possible. If you can't do it right away, keep the flowers cool. When you do get to where you can put them in a vase, remove leaves from the flower stems that will be in the water, cut the stems underwater preferably with a knife (a sharp knife) and then get them into the water in the vase. If you find a rose is starting to wilt you can sometimes place the entire rose into warm water, recut the stem and then leave it in the water for a couple of hours.

Fresh flowers are a special gift to a special person at a special time of year. A little bit of time and attention will help to keep them looking as good as possible for as long as possible!