



# **THE BASICS**

## LESSON TWO- HOW TO CONDITION FLOWERS

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Once you get your flowers from your wholesaler or provider, you will need to condition them before they are arranged. Conditioning flowers will ensure that your blooms are in the best possible condition for the maximum possible amount of time.

The first thing you'll need to do is to remove the outer packaging and remove all the leaves that will be below the water line. If you don't really know where your water line will be, remove all the leaves from the bottom half/two-thirds of the stem. Removing the leaves is so important! As well as making the flower a lot more aesthetic, removing leaves plays a vital role in lengthening flower life-span. Leaves that are in the water will rot, releasing harmful bacteria and causing your flowers to wilt much faster.

The next step is to make a very sharp cut at a 45-degree angle, either with floral scissors or a knife. At this stage, take around the bottom inch off the stem. Cutting at a 45-degree angle gives a bigger surface area, allowing for maximum water consumption and preventing stems from lying flat on the bottom of the vase, which could stop them from drinking.

Next, fill your buckets or vases with fresh water and add flower food. Make sure your buckets have been cleaned with warm water and a touch of bleach to kill bacteria. Flowers should be left for a few hours (or preferably overnight!) to ensure maximum water consumption before arranging.

### **Advanced Conditioning Tips**

- Leave flowers out of direct light and in a cool place to ensure maximum shelf-life. If you are thinking about opening a flower business, think long and hard about buying a flower fridge. Yes, it's a big investment for small businesses, but it will pay off. Flower fridges will lengthen the lifespan of your flowers massively, from a few days to a couple of weeks. If you can't stretch just yet, don't worry- you can leave them in a cool, dark place.
- For long lasting hydrangeas, fully submerge them bottom-up in water for a few hours/overnight. Hydrangeas are one of the only flowers that drink through their petals as well as through their stem. Submerging them will ensure maximum life-span, and bring back sorry-looking blooms.
- Woody stems, like hydrangeas, need to be cut vertically up the stem for maximum water consumption. After making the first 45-degree cut, make another vertical cut around 1-inch up the stem.
- Some flowers, like amaryllis and delphiniums, have hollow stems. After making your cut, fill the stems with water and block the base with cotton wool.



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- Flower food is always the best option to add to the water to extend the life of your flowers. If you don't have access to flower food, there are other things you can do. Adding a small amount of vodka to the water will kill bacteria present. The same goes for a very small amount of bleach or detergent. A spoonful of sugar will also act as flower food and help your blooms stay fresher for longer.
- Single leaves, for example philodendrons and ferns, can be fully submerged in water before use.
- Avoid touching the flower heads too much as this will weaken them and cause your flowers to wilt faster.