

Floral Conditioning

The purpose of conditioning is to extend the vase life of cut flowers. Good conditioning is believed to increase vase life by a third. Here are the core basics of conditioning that are the most effective and not overly complicated. Below are just a few easy steps to address different types of stems.

The Key Basics for all Stems

- Use clean buckets, vases and clippers
- Clean, cool water; easier for stems to absorb cool water; warm encourages flower heads to open more quickly
- Remove lower stem leaves, any that are below the water line, minimizing water needs of stems and preventing bacterial growth.
- Cut 1-2 inches from bottom of stems at an angle, which increases the surface area, increasing water absorption. NOTE: flowers not cut on an angle are bulbous stem varieties and some stems benefit from being actively sealed ie Sap producing stems
- Let the stems rest: After a fresh cut, plunge into water and leave to condition (hydrate) in a cool spot away from direct sunlight or heating vents for 12-24 hours
- Floral preservative products do work; when stems are cut so is their food supply. Floral preservatives contain a source of food, hydrator and an antibacterial agent.

The Particulars for

Hearty stems

These are the easy to care for flowers following the general instructions above

achillea	cosmos	hydrangea (commercial)	stock
alstromeria	dahlias	hypericum	sunflower
asclepias pea	delphinium	japanese anemones	sweet
astrantia stems	forget-me-nots	roses (commercial)	tropical
campanula	fritillaria	japanese anemones	vines
carnations	grasses	roses (commercial)	wax flowers

chrysanthemums	non woody greens	scabiosa	zinnias
cornflowers	hollyhocks	snapdragons	
veronica			

Bulbous Stems

These stems are pulled from the ground, with bulbs or roots still attached. The stem cannot drink through the white section of stem; need to cut to the green area to rehydrate.

Best to cut these stems **straight** and place in COLD water. **Rewrap the stems** in their paper after cutting, keeping them straight. If allowed to droop as they hydrate they will become rigid in that shape

alliums	grape hyacinths	irises	ranunculus
daffodils	hyacinths	paperwhites	tulips

Softer, Delicate Stems

Need extra care

Clean angled cut and place stems into just boiled water for 30 seconds. Hot water forces air out from the stems and improves absorption. Lean stems to the side to lessen steam affecting flower head. Then place in cool water.

Anemones	forget-me-nots	hydrangea (homegrown)	zinnias
Bluebells	geranium	poppies	
Butterfly ranunculus	hellebores	roses (homegrown)	
Cow parsley	herbs	sunflowers	

Sap producing, Milky Stems

When cut these stems produce a milky substance which can irritate your skin and other flowers.

Condition as normal but condition separately. If mixed in with other stems the ends need to be seared. If recutting for arrangement place under running water and then sear.

Euphorbia	figus	tweedia
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Hollow Stems

Pinhole thru top of stem will allow water to move up stems.

Amaryllis delphinium

Woody Greens, Leaf Branches and Blossoms

Treat larger branches like hearty stems but increase the surface area with making an additional vertical split at stem base. Branches are heavy drinkers so make certain they are in plenty of water. Cut before bloom fully open.

beech	crabapple	hornbeam	ninebark
pussywillow			
birch	diabolo	lilac	viburnum
cherry	hawthorn	maple.	forsythia

Home Garden or Foraged Branches

Best to cut early in the morning when the stems are at their most hydrated. Cut the stem as long as possible. Best to condition in hot water.

Carry a bucket with water into the garden. Strip bottom leaves from stem and submerge as quickly as possible. Follow specific conditioning guides depending on varieties. Cut the stem as long as possible; best for plant to regrow and easier to use in arrangements. Best to cut flowers before they are at full bloom.

The tough ones:

Hydrangea: If wilt prematurely recut stem and submerge entire stem and flower head in bathtub of warm to hot water. Also try recutting stem and you will see white pith inside the stem; gently remove about ¼ in of pith and resubmerge in water. Homegrown hydrangea best to cut mature flower head.

Lily of Valley: Leave roots attached and submerge in water

See below for individual flower conditioning

The Particulars

- Allium: Cool water, add one teaspoon of bleach for each quart of water to prevent an onion-like odor.
- Amaryllis: Warm water, pin hole in top of stem, tape bottom of stem as they have a tendency to slit and curl if not cut with knife or scapel. Scissors cause compression.
- Anemone: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds then move to cool water
- Apple Blossom: Cut before bloom fully open, split stems, hot water. Mist foliage
- Astilbe: warm water
- Baby's breath: Cold water
- Bachelor button: Cut when flower fully open as buds will not open further after cut. Warm water
- Baptisia: Hot water
- Begonia: Boiling water for a few seconds, deep cool water
- Begonia Rex Leaves: Boiling water for a few seconds, cold water, dry leave before arranging
- Bells of Ireland: Cold water
- Berries: Split stems, warm water. Can spray with clear plastic to keep berries from dropping
- Black-eyed Susan (rudbeckia): Boiling water for a few seconds then deep cool water
- Bleeding Heart: Cut when $\frac{1}{4}$ open. Shorter stem as foliage needs to remain on plant for next years growth. Boiling water for a few seconds then cold water
- Blue Lace: Cut when $\frac{1}{2}$ open. Deep, cold water
- Bougainvillea: Remove thorns and foliage. Split stem, boiling water for a few seconds and then cold water. Mist with cool water

- Boxwood: Split stems, warm water
- Buttercup: Boiling water for a few seconds then warm water
- Butterfly Bush: Cut when ½ of lower spike open. Split stem, hot water for a few seconds then cool water
- Calendula: deep warm water
- Camellia: cut one bloom when fully open, wrap in wet paper towel and condition in refrigerator. For cut branch, split stem, warm water
- Canna: dip in boiling water then cold water
- Canterbury bells (campanula): sear stems, deep cold water
- Carnation: rub stem end in salt, deep cool water
- Cattail: Cut early in season. No need for water, spray with hair spray to keep intact
- Cherry Blossom: split stems. Dip in boiling water then deep cold water
- Chrysanthemum: Split stem, remove extra foliage, deep cold water
- Clematis: Split stems, place in alcohol for several minutes, then boiling water briefly then cool water
- Cleome: Split stems, warm water
- Coleus: Dip in boiling water then cold water
- Columbine: warm water
- Coral Bells: Cut when half of flower spike open, warm water
- Coreopsis: cut fully open flower, deep cold water
- Cosmos: Pick when center of flower smooth, deep cold water
- Crocus: cold water
- Daffodil: Condition separately from other flowers. Do not like oasis, use floral picks buried in oasis or punch hole in oasis with pencil. Sear stem or boiling water.
- Dahlia: Boiling water for a few minutes, then cold water
- Daisy: boiling water for a few seconds then warm water
- Delphinium: Cut when upper flowers in bud, make pin hole in top of hollow stem, deep cold water

- Dusty Miller: split stems, deep warm water
- Echinops: split stems, warm water
- Euphorbia: cut when clusters ½ open. Dip stems in boiling water for several seconds then warm water.
- Evergreens: Split stems, hot water
- Fern: Pick after spores are brown, cold water
- Feverfew: split stems, warm water
- Forget-me-Not: Dip in boiling water then cold water
- Forsythia: split stems, dip in boiling water for a few minutes then cold water
- Foxglove: warm water
- Freesia: cool water
- Fuchsia: dip stems in boiling water for a few minutes then cold water
- Gaillardia: cool water
- Gardenia: spray with water, keep in air-tight bag in refrigerator until used. Handle with wet hands only to avoid turning petals brown
- Geranium: warm water, spray with hair spray to keep petals on stems
- Geum: cut stems short, dip in boiling water then cold water
- Gladiolus: Cut when second flower open, split stems, cold water
- Golden Rod (solidago): remove most leaves, warm water
- Heliotrope: split stems, hot water allow to cool to room temp
- Hellebores: best to cut mature flower. Shallow cut down length of stem then cold water
- Herbs: avoid new growth, room temperature water, spray foliage
- Hollyhock: stems in boiling water for several minutes then warm water in dark area
- Honeysuckle: dip stems in boiling water then cool water
- Hyacinth: condition separately, cold water
- Hydrangea: cut mature flowers with some woody stem is best. Split and sear stem then room temp water. Spray flower heads
- Iris: Cut on slant as flower begins to open then cold water

- Ivy: submerge in cool water
- Jacob's Ladder: hot water allow to cool to room temp. Repeat if flowers wilt
- Jasmine: dip in boiling water then cool water
- Jupiter's Beard: Split stems then cold water
- Lamb's Ear: dip stems in boiling water for several seconds or sear
- Lantana: Split stems the hot water
- Larkspur: cool water
- Lavender: cut when half the spike is open, split stems then warm water
- Leaves: deep cold water. Tie in roll for curled leaves
- Liatris: Cut when spike i/2 open then cool water
- Lilac: split stems, strip all but a few leaves close to top flower. Dip in boiling water for a few seconds then warm water. A small amt of alcohol may help
- Lily: cut on slant then warm water. Remove stamens. Cut only ½ stem or less as bulb feeds off lower part of stem
- Lily-of-the-Valley: pull with some root then deep warm water
- Lobelia: cut when ½ flower spike open. Dip in boiling water for a few seconds then warm water
- Lunaria (money plant): place stems in very hot water for several minutes then cool water
- Lupine: cut when ½ spike open. Pin hole to top of stem and then room temp water
- Magnolia: scrape bark from base of stem, split stems, place in hot water and allow to cool
- Maidenhair fern: submerge whole stem in hot water. When water cools put in tied plastic bags, leave in a cool place
- Marguerite: re-cut stems underwater then warm water
- Maple leaves: multiple vertical cuts in stem then warm water
- Marigold: Re-cut stems under water then cold walter
- Milkweed: Cut when ½ open removing most of foliage. Sear stems then warm water
- Mint: place stems in boiling water for several minutes the cool water

- Mock-Orange: Remove most leaves. Split stems then immediately to warm water.
- Monarda: cut when $\frac{1}{4}$ open then warm water
- Monkshood: deep warm water
- Nasturtium: cold water
- Nigella: warm sugar water
- Orchid: cut stem on slant, warm water
- Pansy: pinch off stems rather than cut then cold water immediately
- Peony: cut when flowers just beginning to open. Place stems in boiling water for several minutes or sear. Turn upside down and allow water to run over leaves and flower. Do not place in metal container
- Petunia: cut when flower fully open. Cut stem under cold water and then keep in cold water
- Phlox: Cut when clusters are half open. Split stems then warm water
- Platycodon: Cut when $\frac{2}{3}$ bud are open. Place in boiling water or sear stems then warm water
- Plumbago: place stems in boiling water for several minutes then deep warm water
- Poinsettia: cut from potted plant. Sear stems then cool water
- Poppy: Cut when bud shows color. Sear stems then deep cold water
- Primrose: place stems in boiling water for a few seconds then deep warm water. Pin hole in top of stem
- Pussywillow: cut when $\frac{1}{4}$ branch mature. Split stems then cold water
- Queen Anne's Lace: Cut at any stage then hot water
- Quince: Split stems then hot water
- Ranunculus: place in boiling water for a few seconds then room temp water
- Redbud: cut branches when buds appear. Split stems then hot water
- Red Hot Poker: split stems then deep cold water
- Rose: Cut at angle remove large thorns and lower leaves. Split stems then hot water. If wilt recut and condition in very hot water
- Salvia: place stems in boiling water for a minute then deep warm water

- Scabiosa: cut when fully open. Remove most leaves then warm water
- Snapdragon: cut when spike $\frac{1}{4}$ in bloom then warm water
- Spider Lily: split stems then deep warm water
- Spirea: cut branch when $\frac{1}{2}$ in bloom. Split stems placing in boiling water for several minutes then warm water
- Statice: cut when full bloom and then warm water
- Stock: cut in late afternoon. Split stems, dip in boiling water for several seconds then cold water
- Strawflower: dip stems in boiling water for several seconds then cool water
- Sunflower: Cut in late afternoon. Split stems then warm water
- Tulip: Prick top of stem for air release. Warm water, keep wrapped in brown paper while conditioning to keep straight
- Verbena: Cut when buds a showing color. Dip in boiling water for several seconds then warm water
- Veronica: Cut spikes when $\frac{1}{2}$ flowering then warm water
- Viburnum: Cut when flowering or for the berries. Split stems then dip in boiling water for several minutes, then deep warm wter
- Violet: cut and submerge for one hour in cold water then overnight with clean cold water. Mist with cool water
- Virginia Bluebells: cut when 3 to 4 flowers of cluster open. Remove lower leaves. Split stems and then hot water.
- Wallflower: Split stems then warm water
- Weigela: Split stems then warm water
- Wild Flowers: Cut and immediately place in hot water. Allow water to cool. Repeat if needed
- Wisteria: Cut when cluster $\frac{1}{4}$ open. Split stems then warm water. Mist with cool water
- Woody stems: split and scrape stems for about 2 inches at base then warm water. New cuts must be reconditioned
- Yarrow: Cut and then warm water
- Yucca: place stems in boiling water leaving in water as cools. Deep water

- Zinnia: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds then warm water. Best to cut when zinnia has been watered right before cutting