

Roses for Valentine's Day
Rick Abrahamson
Week of February 1, 2010

With Valentine's Day just around the corner come thoughts of love and romance toward our sweetheart. The classic symbol of love and romance is the most elegant of flowers, the red rose. Florists find that the demand can be overwhelming as this special day approaches. There are many beautiful and less expensive floral choices but roses remain the standard gift for both women and men on Valentine's Day. Placing your order early will give those florists the heads up and ensure that they have plenty to fill your order correctly.

Roses are fragile and special care is needed to extend their vase life. Following are some tips for extending the life of roses, as well as other cut flowers.

Use a clean vase. After thoroughly scrubbing the vase clean, rinse it well so that it is absolutely free of cleaning product residue. Before placing the flowers in the vase, prepare the water by adding the floral preservative that comes from the florist to lukewarm water. An alternative is to use a home floral preservative made by adding 2 tablespoons of lemon juice, 1 tablespoon sugar and ½ teaspoon of bleach to one quart of lukewarm water. Avoid adding aspirin, pennies, 7-up, alcoholic beverages, or other "home remedies" as they have little or no value in the preservation of cut flowers.

Remove any leaves that will be under water in the vase. Bacterial action breaks down leaves rapidly resulting in foul water that will shorten the life of the flowers. While holding the stems underwater, cut the end at a 45 degree angle and re-cut them every day or two so that the stems do not rest squarely on the bottom of the vase, which can prevent water uptake into the stem.

Place the arranged flowers in a cool location. Placing them in direct sunlight or near radiators, heat vents and other heat sources will greatly shorten their vase life. Of course, they should be in a place where you can admire them, but at night or other times when you are not in the room, place them in a cooler location.

Prolong rose life for a few days by re-cutting the stems. After cutting, submerge them by placing horizontally in slightly warm water in a bathtub or other large vessel for several hours. When the roses have become hydrated, remove them and return to a properly prepared vase.

By following these simple steps the roses received for Valentine's Day should last longer than if just left to themselves. Remember to take lots of photos of your Valentine's Day flowers so that you can remember them in all of their glory even after they have become a memory of Valentine's Days gone by.

Source: Carl Hoffman, University of Minnesota Extension Educator in Sterns and Benton counties.

Give me a call at 605-394-2188 if you have questions about cut flowers or other horticultural topics. If email is your thing drop me a line at ricky.abrahamson@sdsu.edu. You can also visit us online at www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html.