

## CONDITIONING FLOWERS

When we create a flower arrangement we want the creation to last as long as possible. The proper conditioning of the cut plant material before arranging can ensure that the life of your flowers and greenery is prolonged as much as possible. The following methods for conditioning flowers have been tested and proven to be effective.

Maximize water absorption and water maintenance:

Cut your flowers early in the morning or near or after sunset.

Cut the stems as long as possible.

Place the flowers in warm water and leave them for several hours or overnight to absorb as much water as possible.

Split the ends of woody-stemmed flowers or branches. Place them in hot water and leave them for eight hours or overnight. For flowers with stems that bleed white milky juices such as poinsettias and poppies, sear the stem over a flame to seal the cut and preserve moisture.

Re-cut stems before placing the flowers in arrangements.

### Minimizing Bacteria Growth

Use fresh water, clean clippers, and clean containers. To clean a container, fill it with water, add a small amount of liquid bleach, and leave it for at least fifteen minutes.

Remove all leaves that would be underwater in the arrangement to prevent the growth of bacteria and rotting.

Add a small amount of alcohol, liquid bleach, or sugar to the water in your vase or container to retard the growth of bacteria. Use the following proportions:

Alcohol: One teaspoon of vodka or grain alcohol, not rubbing alcohol, to one quart of water.

Bleach: One teaspoon of bleach to one quart of water.

Sugar: One tablespoon of sugar to one quart of water.

Since cut flowers absorb an amazing amount of water, add water to the vase or container daily. If the water is cloudy, add a little liquid bleach with the new water. There is really no need to change all the water in the container, just add water as needed. Be sure to check the water level daily.

### Reviving Wilted Flowers

Re-cut ends of stems. Place stems in very hot water on a slant so that steam will not damage the blooms.

Agapanthus (Lily-of-the-Nile): Cut when outer rim of the flower is showing its funnels. Buds will open after cutting. Condition overnight in warm water.

Ageratum: Condition overnight in warm water.

Ajuga: Condition overnight in cold water.

Allium: Condition for several hours or overnight in cool water. Add one teaspoon of bleach for each quart of water in the container to prevent an onion-like odor.

Alstroemeria (Peruvian Lily): Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Alyssum: Cut when buds are one-half in flower. Condition overnight in cool water.

Amaryllis: Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Andromeda (Pieris Japonica): Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Anemone (Japanese): Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cool water.

Anemone (Windflower): Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition for several hours or overnight in cold water. Does not do well in oasis because stems tend to soften.

Angelica: Place stems in one inch of boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

Anthemis: No special treatment is required.

Anthurium: Cut stems underwater. Condition for one hour in warm water.

Apple Blossoms: Cut before bloom fully opens. Split stems. Place in hot water and condition overnight. Spray foliage with a fine mist of cool water.

Artemisia: Split stems and place in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in warm water.

Artichoke (globe): Placed stems in boiling water for one minute. Submerge completely in cold water for one hour.

Aster (Michaelmas Daisy Stokesia): Split stems and place in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in tepid water.

Astilbe: Condition overnight in warm water.

Aucuba Japonica: Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water. Foliage lasts for months.

Azalea: Split stems. Add one teaspoon of alcohol for each quart of hot water and condition overnight. Each small branch cut from the main stem must be reconditioned. Spray with a fine mist of cold water.

Baby's Breath (gypsophila): Condition for two hours or more in cold water.

Bachelor's Button (cornflower): Cut flowers when fully open because buds will not open after cutting. Condition overnight in warm water.

Bamboo: Place stems in boiling white vinegar for two minutes. Submerge in cold water overnight.

Baptisia (false indigo): Condition overnight in hot water.

Begonia: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Begonia Rex Leaves: Dip stems in boiling water for thirty seconds. Submerge in cold water for one hour. Place stems in cool water and allow leaves to dry before arranging.

Bells of Ireland: Submerge overnight in cold water.

Bergenia: Submerge leaves for a few hours in cold water. Dry them off before arranging.

Berries: Split stems and condition overnight in warm water. Spray with clear plastic to prevent berries from dropping.

Bittersweet: Cut before fruit opens. Strip off leaves. Hang in a dark, dry place. Berries will open with no blemishes. Spray with clear plastic spray to prevent berries from shriveling.

Black-Eyed-Susan (rudbeckia): Dip stems in a small amount of boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Bleeding-Heart (dicentra): Cut when flowers are one-fourth open. Do not take much foliage from young plants because it is needed to produce strong growth for the next year. Dip stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cold water.

Blue Lace-Flower (didiscus): Cut when one-fourth to one-half of the flower has opened. Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

Bougainvillea: Remove foliage and thorns. Split stems, dip in boiling water for a few seconds, and submerge the spray in cold water for several hours. Stand in deep water for one hour or more to drip dry. Re-cut stems under water if shortening them for an arrangement. Spray regularly with a fine mist of cool water.

Boxwood: Split stems. Submerge overnight or for several days in warm water. To give a shiny look, add a small amount of vegetable oil to the water.

Burning-Bush: Condition for several hours in warm water.

Buttercup (wild): Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in warm water.

Butterfly Bush: Cut when one-half of flower spike is open. Split stems and place in hot water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cool water.

Butterfly Weed: Pick when flower is one-half open. Add two tablespoons of sugar for each quart of warm water and condition overnight. If flowers wilt, revive them in hot water.

Caladium: Dip stem in boiling water. Submerge the whole leaf in cold water for several hours.

Calendula (pot marigold): Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Camassia: Split stems. Condition overnight in cold water.

Camellia: Cut an individual bloom when fully open. Wrap in wet cotton and condition in refrigerator overnight. When cutting a branch, split stems and condition overnight in warm water.

Candytuft (iberis): Split woody stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Canna: Leaves - dip stems in boiling water and then submerge in cold water for several hours.

Canterbury Bells (campanula): Sear stems. Condition in deep, cold water for several hours.

Carnation: Rub stem ends in salt. Condition for two hours or more in deep, cool water.

Caryopteris (hardy blue spirea): Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Cattail: Gather early in the season. Will last indefinitely out of water. Spray with hair or acrylic spray to keep them from disintegrating.

Cherry Blossoms (prunus): Split woody stems. Dip stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition for two hours or more in deep, cold water.

Chrysanthemum: Split stems. Remove foliage from stems that will be below the water line. Condition for several hours in deep, cold water.

Clematis: Split stems and place them in alcohol for several minutes. Then place stems briefly in a little boiling water. Condition overnight in cool water.

Cleome (spider flower): Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Clover: Cut when flowers are about three-quarters open. Condition overnight in warm water.

Cockscomb (celosia): Cut when flowers are at least three-quarters developed. Under-developed flowers do not keep. Dip stems for a few seconds in boiling water. Condition overnight in cold water.

Coleus: Dip stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cold water.

Columbine (aquilegia): Place stems in warm water for one hour before arranging.

Coral Bells (heuchera): Cut when one-half of spray is in flower. Condition overnight in warm water.

Coreopsis: Cut fully-open flowers with centers still tight. Condition overnight in deep, cold water. Add one tablespoon of salt to each quart of water.

Cosmos: Pick when center of flower is smooth and before pollen ripens. Condition overnight in deep, cold water. Pollen contains moisture which might harm furniture.

Crocasmia: Condition overnight in tepid water

Crocus: Condition overnight in cold water.

Daffodil: Squeeze the substance from the lower part of the stem before placing in one or two inches of water. Since daffodils do not like oasis, arrange in flower picks or small jars buried in oasis, or punch holes in oasis with a pencil for each daffodil.

Dahlia: Place stems in two to three inches of boiling water for a few minute, then immediately into cold water. Condition overnight in cold water.

Daisy (shasta): Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition for two hours or more in deep, warm water.

Daylily (hemerocallis): The flowers will last for only one day. Buds continue to open in water. Cut stems on a slant. Condition for several hours in warm water.

Delphinium: Cut when the upper flowers are in bud and the florets have just opened. Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

Deutzia: Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Dianthus (sweet william): Re-cut stems. Condition overnight in cold water. Never leave out of water before arranging as color will fade.

Dogwood Blossoms (cornus): Cut in early morning or late afternoon. Cut before fully open. Split woody stems. Condition overnight in warm water. Each small branch cut from the main stem must be reconditioned.

Doronicum (leopard's bane): Condition overnight in warm water.

Dusty Miller: Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Echinops (globe thistle): Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Elaeagnus: Split stems. Place in boiling water briefly. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Epimedium: Split stems and dip in boiling water for twenty seconds. Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

Euonymus: Split stems. Condition for twelve hours or more in warm water.

Evergreens: Split stems. Condition overnight in hot water

Ferns: Pick after spores are brown. Submerge overnight in cold water. Remove and place stems in water until ready to arrange.

Feverfew: Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Fleabane (erigeron): Place stems in boiling water for several minutes. Condition overnight in warm water.

Foam Flower (erigeron): Submerge leaves in cool water and condition for several hours.

Forget-Me-Not: Dip stems in boiling water. Condition overnight in cold water.

Forsythia: Split stems. Place in boiling water for one or two minutes and then immediately into cold water. Add a dash of alcohol to the water. Condition overnight.

Foxglove (digitalis): Condition overnight in warm water.

Frangipani: Place stems in cold water for five minutes and then in deep, cold water. Handle with wet hands and place in an air tight plastic bag in the refrigerator until ready to arrange.

Freesia: Place in cool water for several hours. Add a dash of alcohol to the water.

Fuchsia: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in cold water.

Gaillardia (blanket flower): No particular conditioning is necessary. Will last well in water.

Gardenia: Spray with water. Keep in an air-tight plastic bag in the refrigerator until used. Handle with wet hands only.

Geranium: Place in warm water for several hours. Spray with hair spray to keep petals from falling off so quickly.

Gerbera: Dip stems in boiling water. Condition overnight in cold water.

Geum: Cut stems short and place in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in warm water.

Gladiolus: Cut when second flower opens. Leave out of water for one-half hour. Split stems and condition overnight in cold water.

Globe Amaranth: Remove any unnecessary foliage. Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Golden Rain Tree: Cut when flowers are one-half open. Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Goldenrod (solidago): Remove most of the leaves and condition overnight in tepid water.

Hazel (corylus): Peel off two or three inches of bark and split the stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Heliotrope: Split stems. Place in hot water and condition overnight.

Herbs: Avoid new growth. Condition overnight in tepid water. Spray foliage with a fine mist of cool water.

Hollyhock (althaea): Place stems in boiling water for several minutes. Condition in a dark room for at least 48 hours in deep, warm water.

Honeysuckle: Dip stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cool water.

Hosta: Cut when two or three flowers are open. Split stems. Place in cold water almost up to flower heads and condition overnight. The leaves should be submerged overnight in cold water.

Hyacinth (grape): Squeeze substance out of stem. Condition overnight in cold water.

Hydrangea: Flowers will last better if they are cut when they are mature. If possible, cut some woody stem with the flower. Split and sear stems. Submerge in tepid water for several hours. Spray flowers with a fine mist of cool water.



Iris: Cut stem on the slant after flower begins to open. It will be in full bloom by morning. Condition for several hours in cold water. Remove each flower as it fades.

Ivy: Submerge in cool water for two to four hours. Condition overnight in cold water.

Ixia: Condition overnight in cold water. Jack-in-the-Pulpit: Condition overnight in cold water.

Jacob's Ladder (polemonium): Place in hot water. Leave until water cools. If flowers wilt, repeat the process.

Jasmine: Dip stems in boiling water. Condition for several hours in cool water.

Jupiter's Beard (centranthus): Split stems. Condition overnight in cold water.

Knotweed: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in warm water.

Laburnum: Split stems and scrape off two inches of bark. Remove unnecessary leaves. Condition overnight in warm water.

Lady's Mantle (alchemilla mollis): Remove a few of the leaves. Place stems in deep, warm water. Condition overnight.

Lamb's Ears (stachys lanata): Dip stems in boiling water for twenty seconds or sear stems. Condition overnight in tepid water. Do not submerge hairy leaves.

Lantana: Split stems. Condition overnight in hot water.

Larkspur: Condition overnight in cool water.

Laurel: Split woody stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Lavender: Cut flowers when one-half the spike is open. Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Lavatera: Place stems in one inch of boiling water. Then fill container with cold water and condition overnight.

Leaves: If you wish leaves to be curled or to go in wavy shapes, tie them with string into a loose or tight roll. Place in deep, cold water for several hours.

Lenten Rose: Make a shallow cut down the length of the stem. Condition overnight in deep, cold water. Will last longer if arranged in deep water.

Liatris: Cut spikes when the flowers are one-half open. No special treatment is necessary.

Ligustrum: Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Lilac (syringa): Split stems. Strip off all leaves except for the one nearest the top blossom. Peel off bark two inches up the stem. Dip stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Add a dash of alcohol to tepid water and condition overnight. For arrangements, leaves can be used separately and conditioned in the same way.

Lily: Cut stems on a slant and condition in warm water for several hours. Remove stamen tips with scissors to keep flowers clean. When cutting a lily, never cut more than one-half of the stem because the bulb feeds from the remainder of the stem.

Lily-of-the-Valley: Condition for an hour or two in deep, warm water.

Lobelia (cardinal flower): Cut when one-fourth to one-half of the flowering spike is open. Place stem ends in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition several hours in tepid water. Remove faded flowers as upper buds unfold.

Lupine: Cut when flowering spike is about one-half open. Fill hollow stems with water and place in a weak starch and water solution to prevent petals from dropping. Lychnis (campion): Condition overnight in warm water.

Lythrum (purple loosestrife): Important to cut when one-fourth or less of the flower bud is open. Condition overnight in warm water.

Magnolia: Scrape bark away from base of stems. Split stems. Place in hot water and allow to cool in water before arranging.

Mahonia: Peel off about two inches of bark from base of the stems. Split stems. Place in boiling water for several minutes. Condition for six hours or more in warm water.

Maidenhair Fern (adiantum): Submerge whole stem in hot water. When water cools tie in a plastic bag and leave in a cool place for one or two days.

Marguerite: Re-cut stems underwater. Condition overnight in warm water.

Maple Leaves (in autumn): Hammer stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Marigold: Re-cut stems underwater. Condition overnight in cold water.

Milkweed: Cut when one-half open. Remove as much foliage as possible. Sear stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Mimosa: Cut when one-half in flower. Submerge flower heads in cold water for a few seconds; then dip the stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition for several hours in warm water. Pachysandra: Condition for several hours in deep, cold water.

Pansy: Pinch off rather than cut stems. Place in cold water immediately and condition overnight.

Passion-Flower: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Submerge whole vine for several hours in cold water.

Peach Blossoms: Scrape bark two to three inches upward from the base of the stem. Split stems and dip in boiling water. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.

Pansy: Pinch off rather than cut stems. Place in cold water immediately and condition overnight.

Passion-Flower: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Submerge whole vine for several hours in cold water.

Peach Blossoms: Scrape bark two to three inches upward from the base of the stem. Split stems and dip in boiling water. Condition overnight in deep, cool water.



Pearly Everlasting: Flowers last longer if stems are cut short and most of the leaves are removed. Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Peony: Cut when flowers just begin to open. Sear stems or place in boiling water for two minutes. Turn upside down. Let water run lightly over flower and foliage. Condition overnight in warm water. Do not put in metal container. Stems must be seared again if re-cut for arranging.

Periwinkle: Cut as soon as flowers are fully open. Sear stems or place in boiling water for two minutes. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Petunia: Cut when flowers are fully open. Cut stems under cold water and condition in cold water for at least one hour.

Phlox: Cut when clusters are one-half open. Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Phlox Divaricata: Place in tepid water and condition for several hours.

Photinia: Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water. Pachysandra: Condition for several hours in deep, cold water. Pachysandra: Condition for several hours in deep, cold water.

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Passion-Flower: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Submerge whole vine for several hours in cold water.

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Peony: Cut when flowers just begin to open. Sear stems or place in boiling water for two minutes. Turn upside down. Let water run lightly over flower and foliage.

Condition overnight in warm water. Do not put in metal container. Stems must be seared again if re-cut for arranging.

Periwinkle: Cut as soon as flowers are fully open. Sear stems or place in boiling water for two minutes. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Petunia: Cut when flowers are fully open. Cut stems under cold water and condition in cold water for at least one hour.

Phlox: Cut when clusters are one-half open. Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Phlox Divaricata: Place in tepid water and condition for several hours.

Photinia: Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Platycodon (balloon flower): Cut when two or three buds are completely open. Sear stems or place in boiling water. Condition overnight in warm water.

Plum Blossoms: Split stems. Place in boiling water for four minutes and then in deep, tepid water for two hours or more.

Plumbago: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Poinsettia: Cut from potted plant. Split stems. Sear stems for fifteen seconds to seal off sticky sap. Condition overnight in cool water. Will last for approximately one week in oasis.

Pokeweed: Place stems in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition in warm water for several hours or overnight. When using berries, remove leaves and condition for several hours in tepid water.

Poppy: Cut as bud shows color. Sear stems. Condition overnight in deep, cold water. If necessary cut stems a second time, sear stems again.

indefinitely. Primrose: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition several hours or overnight in deep, warm water. Prick stems below head to release air bubbles.

Pussywillow: Cut when buds on one-fourth of branch have matured. Split stems. Condition in cold water until all buds have matured. Remove from water. Will last indefinitely.

**Pyracantha:** Remove thorns from stems for easier handling. Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water. Spray with clear acrylic spray to keep berries from shriveling and falling off. **Queen Anne's Lace:** Cut at any stage, but it will keep best if cut before completely open. Avoid getting water on the bloom. Condition overnight in hot water. Will last approximately one week to ten days.

**Quince Blossoms:** Split stems. Condition overnight in hot water. **Ranunculus:** Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition for several hours or overnight in tepid water.

**Redbud:** Flowers appear before foliage. Cut budded branches before flowers open. Flowers drop quickly if they have opened outdoors. Split stems and condition overnight in hot water. Spray branches once daily with cold water to prevent buds from dropping and to encourage them to open.

**Red Hot Poker:** Split stems. Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

**Rheum:** Sear stems. Submerge overnight in warm water.

**Rhododendron:** Split stems. Place in boiling water for one two two minutes and then immediately in cold water. Add a dash of alcohol to water. Condition for six hours or overnight.

**Rose:** Remove large thorns and lower leaves. Split stems. Condition for several hours in hot water. If roses wilt, re-cut and recondition in very hot water.

**Salvia:** Place stems in one inch of boiling water for one minute. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

**Santolina:** Split stems. Condition for several hours or overnight in cool water.

**Scabiosa:** Cut when almost fully open. Remove unnecessary foliage. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

**Scilla:** Cut when one-half the flowers are open. Condition overnight

**Scotch Broom:** Scrape stems a few inches up from the base and place in boiling water for a few seconds. Can be shaped by tying. Submerge for several hours in cold water. The flowering bloom does not last well.

**Sea Holly (eryngium):** Condition overnight in deep, cold water.

**Sedum:** Cut stems on the slant. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

**Shadbush (amelanchier):** Flowers precede foliage. Cut when not more than one-half of flowers on a branch are open. Split woody stems. Place in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in cold water. **Solomon's Seal:** Place in hot water. Leave until water cools. Flowers wilt quickly. If flowers wilt, repeat the process.

Spider Lily (lycoris): Split stems. Condition for several hours in deep, tepid water.

Spirea: Cut branches when one-half of branch is in bloom. Split stems. Place in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in warm water. Spurge (euphorbia): Cut when clusters are one-half open. Never leave out of water for any length of time. Place stems in boiling water for about fifteen seconds. Condition overnight in warm water.

Statice: Cut when flower is in full bloom and place in warm water several hours. Condition overnight in cold water.

Stock: Cut in late afternoon when flowers look their best and before lower flowers begin to fade. Split stems. Place in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cold water.

Strawflower (helichrysum): Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in cool water.

Sumac: For both red and green sumac, place stems in boiling water for about twenty minutes. Submerge whole spray in cool water for several hours or overnight.

Summer Amaryllis (lycoris): Cut when clusters are one-half open. Condition overnight in cold water.

Sunflower: Cut in late afternoon. Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Tulip: After cutting, prick stem with a pin under the head of the flower. To keep the blossom upright, soak in deep, warm water. Add one tablespoon of sugar for each quart of water in the container.

Verbena: Cut flowers when buds are showing true color. Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in warm water.

Veronica (speedwell): Cut when spikes are one-half in flower. Buds will open. Condition overnight in warm water.

Viburnum: Pick not only during the flowering stage but for the berries in autumn. Split stems and dip in boiling water for a few minutes. Condition overnight in deep, warm water.

Violet: Submerge violets for one hour in cold water. Condition overnight in cold water. Spray arrangement frequently with a fine mist of cool water. To make an attractive natural arrangement, dig a clump of violets and place in a plastic-lined basket.

Virginia Bluebells (mertensia): Cut when three to four flowers of each cluster are open. Remove lower leaves. Split Stems. Condition overnight in hot water. If necessary, repeat hot water treatment.

Virginia Creeper: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Submerge overnight in cold water.

Wallflower: Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Water Lily: Arrange with the leaves. To prevent closing after cutting, drop melted wax between each petal so it cannot possibly close. Weigela: Split stems. Condition overnight in warm water.

Wild Flowers: Place in hot water. Flowers wilt quickly. Leave until water cools. If flowers wilt, repeat the process.

Willow: Split stems and place in one inch of boiling water for a few minutes. Submerge in cold water overnight.

Wisteria: Cut when cluster is about one-fourth open. Split stems and condition overnight in deep, warm water. Spray blossoms and buds with fine mist of cold water.

Witch-Hazel (hamamelis): Split stems and condition in warm water overnight.

Woody Stems: Split and scrape stems about two to three inches up from the base.

Condition overnight in warm water. If stems were not cut to the desired length for the arrangement, any new cut must be reconditioned.

Yarrow (achillea): Condition overnight in tepid water.

Yucca: Place stems in two inches of boiling water and leave until water cools.

Condition overnight or longer in deep water.

Zinnia: Place stems in boiling water for a few seconds. Condition overnight in tepid water. Zinnias last better if plants are watered before they are cut.