

...Your Florist Won't Tell You

Sure, you can order flowers at 3 a.m. from 1-800-Flowers, FTD, or Teleflora. But they'll **charge you \$15** and then just call us.

Most flower shops restock on **Monday mornings**, so that's the time to place an order. Fridays and Saturdays are good days to ask what's on special.

The trick to **making flowers last**: Cut the stems at an angle and change the water at least every other day. And use the floral preservative we give you, not copper pennies.

Don't forget to **wash the vase with soap** when you change the water. Otherwise, the bacteria clinging to the sides will contaminate your new water.

Out of preservative? Try this: one fourth 7Up, three fourths water, and two or three drops of bleach.

How fresh is your rose? Look closely at **the bottom of the blossom** and see how many outside petals have been removed. The more ripped petals you see, the older it is.

That **cheap glass vase** that came with your bouquet? Most of us will gladly recycle it if you return it.

Fruit is the enemy. It emits ethylene gas, so even in a separate bowl a few inches away, it's a surefire flower killer.

Yes, your flowers look beautiful in the window, but the **heat from direct sunlight** will kill them in a day or two.

Ask for a discount. We give one to senior citizens, professional groups, and customers we like.

You can buy the cheaper Valentine's Day roses at the gas station. But they may droop or lose petals the next day. They were **probably cut weeks ago** and put in cold storage.

It's not your nose. Many flowers today don't have much scent, because growers are breeding for long stems and a lengthy vase life instead.

We didn't choose February. If it were up to us, Valentine's Day would be in the summer, when roses are actually in season.

Sources: Russ Schmitt of Schmitt's Florist in Louisville, Kentucky; Larry Novak of Novak's Flower Shoppe in Maple Heights, Ohio; Tina Stoecker of Designs of the Times in West Melbourne, Florida; Sharon McGukin, author of *Flowers of the Heart: A Bride's Guide to Choosing Flowers for Her Wedding*; and Bob Wollam of Wollam Gardens, a commercial cut-flower farm in Northern Virginia. Interviews by Michelle Crouch.

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