



Roses for Valentine's Day

By Dawn Pettinelli

Among the multitude of floral offerings for Valentine's Day, roses always stand out. It's hard to resist the beauty and softness of their petals, their intoxicating perfume and outstanding depth of color. A bouquet of long-stemmed roses may go for anywhere from \$20 to more than \$200 depending on the number, type of arrangement, specialty touches or floral shop. What's an admirer, especially one on a budget, to do?

A single rose with a bit of baby's breath and some greenery in a bud vase is one option. Even a simple bouquet of 3 or 6 roses with some other floral accompaniments would surely be appreciated by the receiver, whether given as a token of romantic love or terms of endearment. When selecting roses, freshness counts. Stems should be strong, flowers partially opened and erect on the stems and leaves should be firm. Avoid any that feel flimsy or look like they are beginning to wilt. Do keep in mind that some are more heavily scented than others.



Rose bouquets. Photo by dmp2022

While red roses, of course, symbolize love and admiration, blossoms of other colors also are associated with meanings or emotions. What they stand for, might help you decide which ones to choose for that special person in your life. Deep and medium pinks express gratitude while light

pinks symbolize innocence and appreciation. Looking to stir up some romantic feelings, try salmon roses that represent desire and excitement. Orange colored blooms indicate fascination, cream, charm and thoughtfulness, yellow signify friendship and white, innocence or new love. The dyed rainbow ones are though to express hope and pride.

Although it is not clear why of all flowers, the rose is emblematic with Valentine's Day, one legend has it that the first red rose appeared on the spot where the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite's, lover Adonis was felled by a wild boar. From the mixture of his blood and her tears, a lovely red rose sprang forth from the ground. Regardless of how this association began, over 250 million roses worth about \$2 billion dollars were sold for Valentine's Day last year according to the National Retail Federation.

When properly cared for, cut roses can be enjoyed for at least a week and maybe two. If not already in a container, prepare a clean vase for them. Always give your vases a good scrubbing with soap and water before storing to reduce chances of bacterial growth that is harmful to cut flowers.

Mix up the packet of floral preservative that typically comes with cut flowers or arrangements as directed on the package. Use lukewarm tap water. While there are suggestions for use of common household items to make a homemade floral preservative solution, some do not work at all while others may not extend vase life to the same extent that these commercially prepared mixes do. All contain some form of carbohydrates, generally sucrose, to serve as a source of energy for the flowers, some type of acidifier as flowers last longer when not in alkaline water, and an anti-bacterial agent to inhibit the growth of damaging microbes. Store any extra floral preservative mix so it can be used when the water needs to be replaced.

Recut the stems of roses at an angle before placing in the vase filled with floral preservative. Use sharp pruners or scissors to avoid crushing the stem. If at all possible, do this with the bottom of the stem in a pan of water. Cut at least one inch off every time the stem is recut. Before placing the rose stems in a vase, remove any of the foliage that would be submerged.

Once arranged, keep your roses in a bright spot but out of direct sunlight. Blooms will last longer at cool temperatures so do not place your bouquet near heaters, fireplaces or in other warm areas. Avoid drafts and check vase water daily. Refill if the level decreases and change the water if it begins to look cloudy. With a little TLC, you can keep Valentine's Day flowers looking fresh for days to come.

If you have questions about roses or other horticultural topics, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.