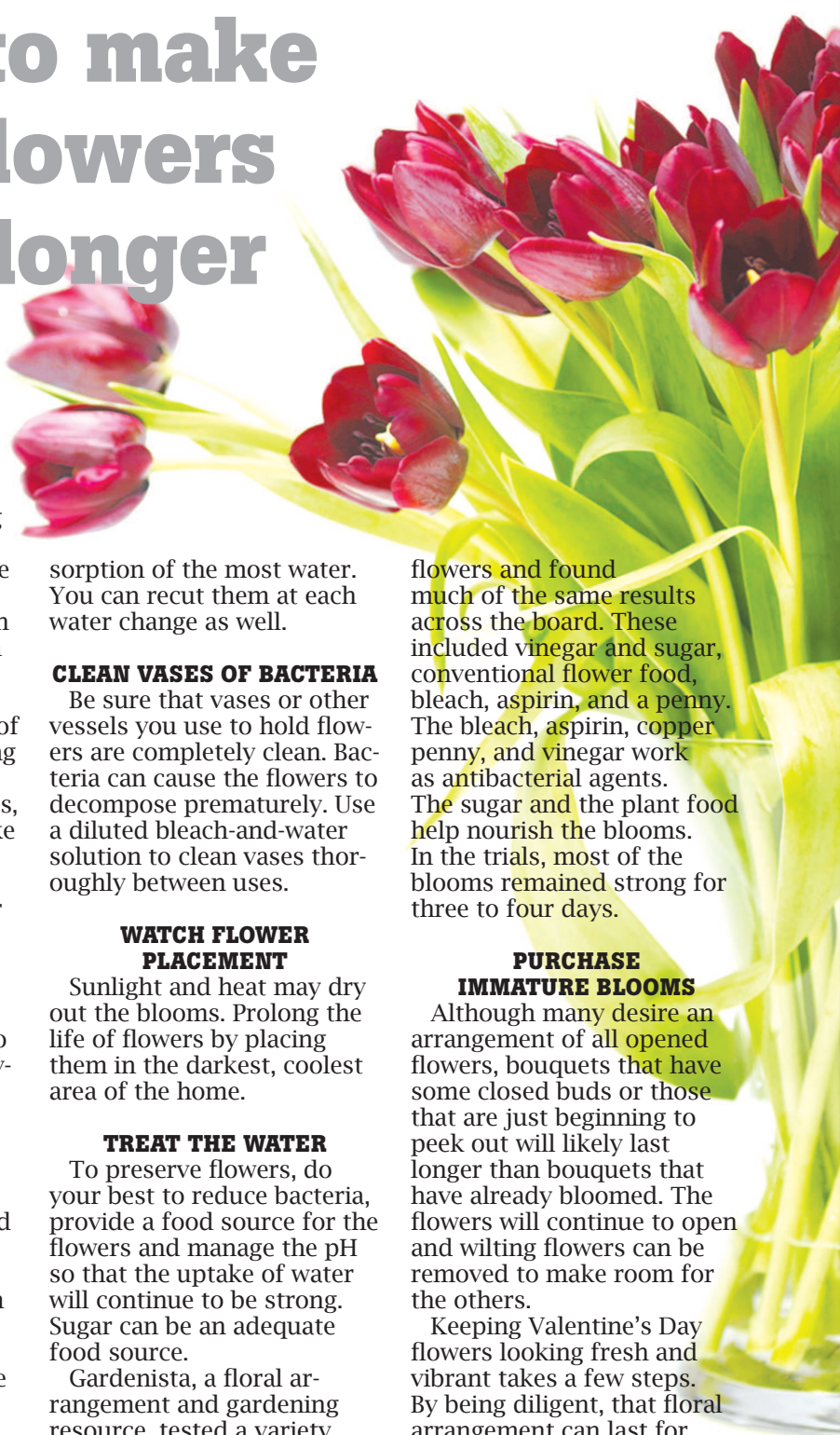


How to make cut flowers last longer



What would Valentine's Day be without a beautiful bouquet of flowers? In addition to chocolate, cards and dining out, flowers — particularly roses — are among the most popular gifts. According to a survey by the National Retail Federation, 58 percent of American men and 16 percent of American women were projected to buy flowers for Valentine's Day 2016, spending a total of \$1.9 billion. Similar spending is predicted for in 2017.

Flowers of all shapes, sizes, colors, and aromas can make popular gifts this February. Prolonging the life of beautiful blooms is a priority for those who want their Valentine's Day arrangements to endure for as long as possible. Florists and other experts differ with regard to the best methods of preserving flowers. Here are some ideas to try.

TRIM STEMS BEFORE IMMERSING IN WATER
The natural emollients and sap in the stems of flowers may cause a film to form over the bottom of the stem after it is initially cut. This can reduce the flower's uptake of water. To alleviate this, cut the stems once the flowers are home. A 45-degree angle allows for the ab-

sorption of the most water. You can recut them at each water change as well.

CLEAN VASES OF BACTERIA

Be sure that vases or other vessels you use to hold flowers are completely clean. Bacteria can cause the flowers to decompose prematurely. Use a diluted bleach-and-water solution to clean vases thoroughly between uses.

WATCH FLOWER PLACEMENT

Sunlight and heat may dry out the blooms. Prolong the life of flowers by placing them in the darkest, coolest area of the home.

TREAT THE WATER

To preserve flowers, do your best to reduce bacteria, provide a food source for the flowers and manage the pH so that the uptake of water will continue to be strong. Sugar can be an adequate food source.

Gardenista, a floral arrangement and gardening resource, tested a variety of methods for preserving

flowers and found much of the same results across the board. These included vinegar and sugar, conventional flower food, bleach, aspirin, and a penny. The bleach, aspirin, copper penny, and vinegar work as antibacterial agents. The sugar and the plant food help nourish the blooms. In the trials, most of the blooms remained strong for three to four days.

PURCHASE IMMATURE BLOOMS

Although many desire an arrangement of all opened flowers, bouquets that have some closed buds or those that are just beginning to peek out will likely last longer than bouquets that have already bloomed. The flowers will continue to open and wilting flowers can be removed to make room for the others.

Keeping Valentine's Day flowers looking fresh and vibrant takes a few steps. By being diligent, that floral arrangement can last for several days.

Valentine's Day Quiz

Test your knowledge of all things related to the day of love.

- How many martyred saints are believed to be named St. Valentine?
 - 12
 - 14
 - 7
 - 16
- Ancient Egyptians used to mummify people with this organ intact because they believed it was the only part of the body necessary for the trip through eternity.
 - heart
 - liver
 - lung
 - eye
- This February holiday was originally observed on February 14th.
 - Lincoln's birthday
 - Washington's birthday
 - Mardi Gras
 - Groundhog Day
- Which confectionary company produced the first box of chocolates for Valentine's Day in the late 1800s?
 - Hershey
 - Nestle
 - Cadbury
 - Mars
- Approximately 110 million of these will be sold and delivered within the three days surrounding Valentine's Day.
 - chocolates
 - roses
 - cards
 - emails
- Who receives the most Valentine's Day cards?
 - teachers
 - wives
 - mothers
 - children
- This Italian city was where Romeo and Juliet lived in Shakespeare's tale.
 - Rome
 - Naples
 - Tuscany
 - Verona
- In what year did Hallmark launch its first Valentine's Day product?
 - 1913
 - 1915
 - 1917
 - 1919
- Which Roman goddess was known as the goddess of love?
 - Vesta
 - Juno
 - Venus
 - Diana
- Which monument was given as the ultimate gift of love?
 - Egyptian pyramids
 - Taj Mahal
 - Eiffel Tower
 - Palace of Versailles

ANSWERS: 1. b 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. b 6. a 7. d 8. a 9. c 10. b

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