

Cut blooms that will last the longest

By METRO CREATIVE

Flowers may look beautiful in gardens and even when snipped and brought inside to brighten up a mantel or dining table. Unfortunately, cut flowers have a finite shelf life. While cut blooms can't live forever, certain varieties will outlast others. Choosing flowers wisely for wedding centerpieces or keepsakes can help couples enjoy selected flowers longer.

Peonies: Peonies can last for about a week or two when brought indoors. HGTV says to snip the stems when the buds are tight, wrap them in newspaper and store them in the refrigerator until you're ready to arrange.



Zinnias: These bright blooms can last for three to four weeks and are best harvested in summer. Related to the sunflower, zinnias are available in a wide range of colors.

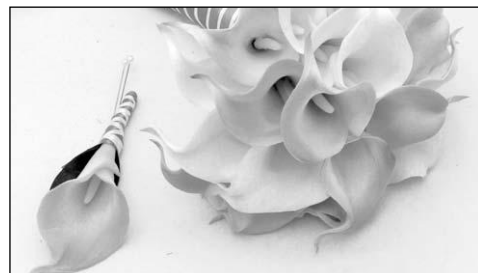
Chrysanthemums: Widely referred to as "mums," these mid-summer to late-fall flowers can last between three and four weeks after being cut. Mums can be used to fill out floral displays because they tend to be inexpensive but durable flowers.



Coneflower: The purple cone-flower is popular, but coneflowers are available in many colors aside from purple. Coneflowers attract butterflies and are beautiful in cut displays.

Carnations: Another budget-friendly flower, carnations are popular from early spring until late sum-

mer. Available in many hues, they can be used in conjunction with other blooms to create well-rounded floral displays that may last between two and three weeks.






Lilies: Lilies are traditional flowers that are beautiful to behold. Lilies are available in various sizes and colors and can be bought fresh year-round. Lilies often last longer than a week after being cut. Look for lilies with tight buds, as such flowers tend to last the longest.


Gladioli: The lovely flowers of the vertical-growing gladiolus, which is sometimes referred to as the "sword lily," are available in yellow, peach, pink, white, and other hues. These bulb-based plants can last up to two weeks after being cut and add variety and texture to floral displays.



Ranunculus: Ranunculus mimic the look of roses and display layer after layer of silky, crepe-like petals. These blooms can last a week or more in vases if they're put in water right after being cut.

Although advice varies on how to keep cut flowers fresh the longest, veteran florist Nic Faitos, senior partner at Starbright Floral Design in New York, who has provided his floral expertise for Reader's Digest, says the best approach is to keep vase water clean. In addition, ProFlowers suggests keeping cut blooms in a cool room away from direct sunlight and heat.



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