

Some facts on flowers and their various meanings

Flowers can represent various emotions. Flowers play a prominent role in many and holidays, perhaps none more than Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day is a busy day for florists. ProFlowers says it accounts for most of the industry's fresh flower sales. Around 78 percent of the flowers purchased for Valentine's Day are cut flowers, and men are the top consumers. Roses are the go-to

flower on Valentine's Day, but shoppers can look to various blooms to send the right message to that special someone in their lives. In fact, each type of flower conveys its own unique message. ProFlowers and Pickup Flowers note that the following are some popular blooms and the messages those flowers are traditionally associated with. Amaryllis: This flower is symbolic of splendid

beauty and can be used to indicate worth. Aster: The aster symbolizes patience, elegance and daintiness. Calla lily: This bloom symbolizes magnificence and beauty, as well as purity and innocence. That is why Calla lilies are often the flower of choice in wedding bouquets. Carnations: These are one of the most popular flowers in the world and are generally symbolic of love

and fascination. Daffodil: Daffodils symbolize regard and chivalry. They also can be indicative of rebirth, new beginnings and eternal life. A single daffodil can signal misfortune, while a bunch expresses joy and happiness. Gerbera daisies: With large, beautiful blooms in a wide assortment of vibrant colors, gerbera daisies are a favorite flower for cheerful sentiments. Gladioluses: These

tall, striking flowers are eye-catching and make great gifts for significant others. The gladiolus symbolizes honor, infatuation and strength. Iris: Irises represent faith, hope and wisdom and are cherished for their big, beautiful blooms. Peony: This flower, which resembles a rose, symbolizes a happy life, happy marriage, prosperity, and good health. Rose: Roses symbol-

ize love in its various forms, and different colors of roses symbolize different things. For example, yellow roses represent care and friendship, while pink roses are given as a token of admiration. Flowers are popular gifts come Valentine's Day. Choosing a flower that best represents the feelings gift-givers want to convey can incorporate even more meaning into a bouquet or basket.

Origins on the heart-shaped chocolate box

Hearts abound on February 14, and few symbols (and gifts) are more widely associated with a holiday than heart-shaped boxes of chocolate are with Valentine's Day. Chocolates became

trendy in the mid-19th century when the first chocolate bar was made by British company J.S. Fry & Sons by combining cacao powder with sugar and cacao butter to make a rich, melt-in-your-mouth treat that was mark-

edly different than the gritty and greasy drinking chocolate that was losing popularity in Europe. Within a few years, competitor Cadbury introduced the first box of chocolates. It was called the "Fancy Box" and it didn't

take long to become wildly popular. The marriage of chocolate and heart-shaped boxes seemed a natural progression, but the National Valentine Collectors Association says that heart-shaped boxes actually predate chocolate boxes. Various heart-shaped vessels, including "betrothal pendants" and silver boxes in the shape of hearts, were popularized a century earlier. There even were heart-shaped porcelain boxes as well as ones for sewing.

Having already introduced a chocolate box, Richard Cadbury marketed

the first Valentine's Day box in 1861. It was filled with delicious chocolates, and later could be saved as a keepsake to store special notes or other mementos, according to the North American Packaging Association. Furthermore, the gift fit with Victorian sensibilities in that it was demurely suggestive, NPR reports. Its introduction coincided perfectly with Valentine's Day, which also soared in popularity around the same time.

Giving chocolate on Valentine's Day also proved popular in North America. The American chocolate company Hershey's intro-

duced its Hershey's Kisses in 1907, and in 1912 the Whitman's Sampler arrived. In the 1920s, Russell Stover unveiled their own heart-shaped boxes, which today still include the "Red Foil Heart" and the "Secret Lace Heart." Russell Stover has since become the No. 1 boxed chocolate brand in the United States. Today, more than 36 million heart-shaped boxes holding 58 million pounds of chocolate are sold each year, reports the education resource SoftSchools. They have become a quintessential symbol of Valentine's Day celebrations.



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THE HISTORY ON CUPID

What would Valentine's Day be without images of a golden-tressed boy armed with bow and arrows? The arrows represent feelings of love and desire, and they are aimed and cast at various individuals, causing them to fall deeply in love - or fall out of it.

In Roman mythology, the boy is known as Cupid and is the son of Venus, the goddess of love. Portrayed as a cherubic and mischievous toddler, this magical boy was purported to be the matchmaker of gods and mortals alike.

For students of Greek mythology, Cupid represents Eros, the Greek word for "desire." He was the son of Aphrodite, Venus' Hellenistic counterpart, and would play with the hearts of mortals and gods, sometimes leaving mayhem in his wake. In Greek mythology, Eros was more teenager than bubbly baby, and capitalized on his status as a heartthrob rather than the cherubic status of Roman mythology, according to Richard Martin, a Stanford University professor. While Cupid may have been an adorable imp, some historians say Eros had a darker

side, going so far as to describe him as calculating and sinister - forcing the wrong people into lovelorn matches.

According to Museum Hack, while



Cupid could make people fall in and out of love, he also was once in love himself. In this telling, Cupid is a young man when Venus learns that a mortal girl is born with such great beauty that others start to forget to worship Venus, adoring this girl instead. Upset about the misdirected adoration toward this mortal, Ve-

nus asks Cupid to have the girl, Psyche, fall in love with a monster. Cupid agrees, but once he sees Psyche he "accidentally" hits himself with one of his own golden arrows and falls in love with Psyche. The resulting match does not prove easy, and through a series of unfortunate events, Psyche must prove her love to Cupid and accomplish various tasks to win back his heart. Eventually, Psyche does and achieves goddess status.

Cupid has been portrayed both as a young man and child through Renaissance art and beyond. When Valentine's Day became popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, Cupid was linked to Valentine's Day celebrations due to his matchmaking abilities. His popularity only continued in the early 20th century, when Hallmark began to manufacture Valentine's Day cards featuring Cupid.

Cupid helped push people together in ancient mythology, and he can even be the catalyst for modern day matchmaking as well.

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