



How to preserve wedding bouquets and arrangements

A bride's gown may garner its share of attention come her wedding day, but floral arrangements also tend to impress guests. Fresh flowers make a wedding and the ensuing reception more inviting and appealing.

According to The Knot.com, couples can expect to spend 8 percent of their wedding budget on flowers. For the average wedding, that equates to roughly \$2,000 for various arrangements and bouquets. That can be a considerable expense for fragile flowers with a shelf life of only a day or two.

But instead of tossing beautiful bouquets and other flowers into the garbage once the wedding day has come and gone, couples can employ various methods to preserve those impressive displays for years to come.

Air drying

One of the easiest ways to preserve flowers is to dry them out. This is best done by hanging blooms upside down so they will remain straight and not warp or wither while drying.

Secure flowers in small bundles and hang from an out-of-the-way spot in a cool, dry area. The flowers may need to remain hanging for up to three weeks before they are completely dried out. After which, gently remove the flowers and arrange them in a vase or another container. Otherwise, reassemble a bouquet how it was and carefully display.

Pressing

Pressing is another way to preserve floral bouquets and arrangements. To press

flowers, find a few heavy books to stack or another weighted object. Place the flowers between parchment paper or waxed paper and lay the heavy items on top. You also can place the flowers in tissue paper between the pages of a book so they are not jostled.

Leave the blooms for a week or two and then check on them before putting them in a shadow box or photo frame.

Chemical drying

Silica gel, borax and regular sand can be used to dry and preserve flowers as well. These can be handy for people who desire to preserve an entire bouquet as-is.

Silica gel is a desiccant commonly found in small packets inside of new shoes and purses. It also can be purchased at home

improvement retailers and is used to dry out musty basements and other areas.

Fill a deep container halfway with the silica gel or other drying material. Put in the bouquet and then gently add more product to the top of the flowers so they are completely submerged. Place a snug cover over the top of the container and let everything sit for about a week. Slowly the moisture will be absorbed from the flowers.

Some people choose to spray dried flowers with a sealant to keep them looking nice longer. An all-purpose craft spray might work. You also can ask for recommendations from the florist who handled your arrangements, and that florist may even preserve the flowers for you for an additional fee.

Unique wedding favor ideas

Guests bring gifts to weddings to express their love for couples. Gift-giving also tends to be reciprocal, with couples making sure that guests leave the celebration with their own tokens of affection and mementos of the special occasion. Although favors are not mandatory, they often are included in wedding planning to make the celebration that much more special.

Favors run the gamut from simple, such as tulle-wrapped Jordan almonds, to elaborate, like crystal vases. While there are no rules regarding the type of favors couples can offer, most soon-to-be-newlyweds prefer something that is not only unique, but will have utility as well. The following are some

favors to consider.

- **Food-based favors:** Guests who already have a drawer full of personalized shot glasses, pens and drink stirrers with couple's names and wedding dates may appreciate the simplicity of a favor they can enjoy without having to store. A gourmet cookie, special jerky, small bottle of olive oil or maple syrup, or another food item that is widely enjoyed can be practical and affordable.

- **Thank-you cards:** Offer each guest in attendance a heartfelt thank-you for attending the wedding. Personalize the sentiments to each guest. If you have a photo of yourself with that guest, include it in the card.

- **Candy or snack bar:** A wedding take-

away can be as simple as letting guests fill up decorative containers with various candies and other treats displayed on a special table at the reception. For a fun twist, try to find old-fashioned candy or items you remember eating as a child to stir up nostalgia.

- **Flower seeds or seedlings:** Sustainable gifts such as flower seeds or small seedling plants can let guests plant something as a remembrance of the day.

- **Scratch-off lottery tickets:** The opportunity to return home from a wedding with a winning ticket and a few extra dollars in their pockets can appeal to guests.

- **Charitable donation:** Rather than giving guests favors, you may want to offer donations

to a charity instead. This is a popular gesture among modern couples.

- **Temporary tattoos:** As a funny gag gift and segue to entertaining photo opportunities, give guests temporary tattoos that have your photo on them. They're clever and will not go to waste.

- **Luggage tags:** Guests will always think of you when they travel far and wide thanks to luggage tags printed with sweet sentiments.

- **Wine stoppers:** Customized wine stoppers will keep guests' bottles of wine fresh without taking up much space in a home bar.

Unique favors will help wedding guests feel even more special at the end of the celebration.