

Add flower food when you first put cut flowers in a vase, then add a fresh, properly measured dose each time you replace the water. Change the water every two or three days, or sooner if it looks cloudy, and follow the directions on the packet.

Start with the right mixture

Fill a clean vase with fresh water and mix in the amount of flower food specified on the packet. The instructions usually give an amount of water for the full packet. If your vase holds less, measure the water and use only the corresponding portion of food.

Stir until the food has dissolved before placing the stems in the vase. The aim is not to give the flowers as much food as possible. A stronger mixture is not necessarily better, so resist the urge to empty an extra packet into a small vase.

Commercial flower food is made to support cut flowers in water. Its ingredients and mixing directions can vary, which is why the packet is a better guide than a fixed number of spoonfuls. Keep any unused portion dry and save it for the next water change.

Replace the water and food together

Every two or three days, take the flowers out and empty the vase. Wash the vase, rinse it well, and fill it with fresh water. Mix in a new dose of flower food for the amount of water you have added, then return the flowers to the vase.

If the water becomes cloudy or smells unpleasant before then, change it sooner. Remove any leaves that would sit below the water line, since submerged leaves can decay in the vase. You can also trim a little from the ends of the stems before putting them back.

These small tasks make it easier to see how the flowers are doing. A stem that has softened or a leaf slipping into the water is easy to miss when you only glance at the arrangement.

What to do between water changes

Flowers take up water, and some water evaporates, so check the level daily. If it has dropped, top it up with fresh water. You do not need to add another full packet simply because the level is lower.

If the packet gives directions for topping up, follow them. Otherwise, wait until the next full water change to prepare a fresh, measured mixture. Adding food repeatedly without measuring can leave too much in the vase.

If you run out of flower food, use clean water and keep changing it regularly rather than guessing at a substitute. Keep the vase away from direct sun and heat, and remove flowers as they fade.

Fresh water and a clean vase matter throughout the life of the arrangement. A measured dose of flower food belongs with each new batch of water, not in the vase every day.

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