

HOME AND GARDEN

Flowers can brighten up a room, enhance an object

To share one's life with nature is one of the most essential ways in which to nurture the soul. This sharing could be a life-long commitment, or one as simple as keeping cut flowers in the home. Europeans, who in general are much larger cut flower

purchasers than North Americans, have always known this fact, be it conscious thought or intuitive feeling.

Mieke Bos, attache for press and cultural affairs at the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Ottawa, said, "When I lived in Holland, I wouldn't dream of going home on a Friday afternoon without an armful of fresh flowers to replace the ones I had bought the week before. And I wasn't alone. On Friday's, the biggest day for flower sales in Holland, everyone seems to be doing the same thing."

Living with flowers need not be a complicated, expensive or time-consuming way to reaffirm our ties with nature. Abundance is always a pleasure, but simplicity can be just as enjoyable.

A few stems of fragrant pink and white lilies in silver water pitcher placed on a sideboard, or 10 stems

of bright yellow gladioli set in a cobalt blue vase bringing life to the tomato red walls of a front hall.

The place for flowers in a home is anywhere that you choose. Near things that you love and wish to honour, or where they will bring you joy or comfort.

Each different flower, or arrangement of flowers, alters the way we look at the objects near it. If your favourite place for flowers is on a sideboard in front of a painting of flowers — draw the painting into the room with a flower arrangement that replicates, or complements, those in the painting.

Conditioning flowers is the key to success

Making flowers look their best and last their longest begins with proper preparation.

Whether you are using flowers from the garden or from the florist, as soon as you get them home,

flower stems should be re-cut on a long, slanting angle using a good sharp knife.

Boughs from shrubs and trees with tough, woody stems — lilacs, dogwood, mock orange, forsythia and others — usually last longer when you slit the stems and remove most of the leaves.

If you cut from the garden or pick flowers in a meadow, do so early in the morning or at the end of the day. Never pick flowers in the heat of midday.

When you start to arrange the flowers, be sure to remove all the leaves that will be under, or even touching the water. Leaf tissue decays quickly in water and shortens the life of the flower.

This article was submitted by the Netherlands Flowerbulb Information Centre.

Red connotes love and passion

Colours affect people's moods and attitudes.

For instance, Red, orange and yellow are called the warm colours, most selected by sociable, gregarious types.

Red connotes love and passion. It attracts attention and has a dynamic effect. Combine red flowers with shrubs and perennial plants with reddish leaves.

Orange is where dynamic red meets energetic yellow.

Yellow speaks to us of cheerfulness and sunshine. It is the colour of spring and new beginnings. This is the first colour people look at in a garden.

Blue and green considered the cool colours are more suitable for the laidback type of individual.

Blue is the colour of peacefulness and serenity. However the colour both recedes (i.e. disappears into the background) and adds depth. Along the sides of a planting area, blue increases appearance of volume.

The colour green has been called the great harmonizer in Oriental philosophy.

The many shades of green found in nature represent the balance of yin and yang. In a garden, green harmonizes all other colours.

Purple, an amalgam of red and blue, indicates creativity and eccentricity. This colour makes an artistic statement.

In flowers, as in other areas, white signifies purity, innocence and peace.

White-flowered plants lighten up dark spots, standing out beautifully against dark backgrounds, such as hedges.

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