

CUT FLOWER GARDENING

Until 100 years ago, one of the most important areas of any garden was the cutting garden, where flowers were planted to be harvested, like a crop, and taken inside to be enjoyed. With all the garden and lifestyle magazines, television shows, and the internet, the cutting garden seems to be making a comeback. Everything old is new again! Bouquets from the grocery store just aren't the same as growing your own.

Cutting gardens used to be associated with grand homes or estates, but you don't need acres of space or a staff like Martha Stewart to create a space for flowers to cut. You can have a cutting garden in a space as small as 15 square feet. If it's properly sited and planted, you can have a wonderful variety of plants that will bring your garden indoors.

The trick to planting a cutting bed is to have plants in bloom constantly. You can use a mix of annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees and herbs to keep producing ornamental foliage, flowers and stems all season long. Cuttings gardens don't need a formal landscape plan, so they are easy to start.

A cutting garden can be beautiful, if you want to put the time and labor into it, but it can be hidden behind a fence, too. Cover the fence with vines such as sweet peas or clematis. Disguise cutting flowers by planting them in your vegetable garden. Some flowers even act as a natural insect repellent!

Keep in mind when making your choices, the best cutting flowers are strong, easy growers, taller varieties that are long blooming with a wide range of colors. The following lists are by no means definitive. Anything with a stem may be used.

Annuals. Alstroemeria, Amaranthus, Arctotis, Baby's Breath, Bells of Ireland, Canna, Carnation, Celosia, Cleome, Cosmos, Dahlias, Gerbera, Gomphrena, Lissianthus, Marigolds, Nicotiana, Penta, Petunia, Salvia, Springeri, Statice, Strawflower, Sunflower, Zinnia.

Perennials. Achillea, Artemesia, Aster, Aquilegia, Asclepias, Chrysanthemum, Coreopsis, Crocosmia, Dianthus, Echinacea, Eupatorium, Ferns, Gypsophilia, Iris, Ivy, Kniphofia, Leucanthemum, Liatris, Lythrum, Malva, Ornamental Grass, Papaver, Peony, Penstemon, Phlox, Platycodon, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Vinca.

Bulbs. Allium, Asiatic Lily, Daffodil, Gladiola, Hyacinth, Lycoris, Oriental Lily, Tuberose, Tulip.

Herbs. Any will work, great with foliage.

Trees & Shrubs. Crab, Crape Myrtle, Cherry, Dogwood, Forsythia, Hydrangea, Lilac, Magnolia, Pussy Willow, Redbud, Red-twig Dogwood, Roses, Walking Stick.

TIPS FOR CUT FLOWER GARDENING

When to Cut.

- 🕒 Look for buds that are just beginning to open, but green buds that are too tight will droop rather than open.
- 🕒 Avoid cutting fully open blooms unless you need instant color.
- 🕒 Cut flowers early in the morning and put in water *immediately*.
- 🕒 Healthy, dark green stems and leaves are signs of flowers with lasting power.



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How to Cut.

- ⌚ Most stems should be cut at an angle or slant, preferably under water. This prevents air bubbles which could impede water intake.
- ⌚ For tubular stems, like daffodils and tulips, it is better to cut straight across.
- ⌚ Score the bark on woody stems.
- ⌚ Burn the ends of sappy stems, such as poppies and dahlias, with a match or candle to seal the stem and prevent sap from clouding the water.

Rules to Remember.

- ⌚ Use sharp cutting tools for a clean cut.
- ⌚ Remove lower foliage that would remain underwater.
- ⌚ Carry a bucket of water with you to the garden and place cut flowers in *immediately*.
- ⌚ Keep material in water when designing.
- ⌚ Clean containers and vases after each use with soapy water to kill bacteria.
- ⌚ Use a floral preservative to provide nutrients and prevent bacterial growth.
- ⌚ Re-cut stems every day or so to prolong the life of cut flowers.
- ⌚ Replenish the water daily with preservative.



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