



The Flower Godmother's

fresh cut flowers

SET UP ESSENTIALS



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Styling, Designing and Arranging

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Flowers are one of the most misunderstood, undervalued, cost effective and seldom used resources we have for positively affecting our attitude, relationships, lifestyle, and wellbeing.

Over the years I've discovered that in general people don't get the best value from their fresh cut flower purchases and gifts because they are not set up to care for them, make them last, and get the most from them.

Here are some basic essentials to have on hand so you can start enjoying more flowers for more reasons far more often and make fresh cut flowers a part of your daily life.

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– Dottie Harrigan "Voice of The Flower Godmother"



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01

SETTING UP A FLOWER HOLDING STATION

A **Flower Holding Station (FHS)** is the perfect place to keep a spontaneous or preplanned purchase of raw flowers before they are ready to be styled. It's also a great place to keep hydrated flowers before you are ready to style them. And, it can be a convenient place for you to keep all your floral supplies ... for fast and easy flower arranging. Here's how to set up a great FHS – Flower Holding Station.

1. You'll want everything in one place. So, gather all your flower arranging tools, (clippers, knives, pruners, wire cutters, scissors) floral design supplies (food packets, water bottles, misters, measuring cups, binding cord) and styling paraphernalia (decorative stones, marbles, wire), and your favorite styling vase together to determine how big your FHS needs to be. *Figure 1.*

2. Choose a container to act as a bucket for your fresh flowers and another to hold dry goods and supplies. The size and number of buckets will depend on the amount of flowers you plan to enjoy. For small amounts of flowers (like a single bundle, bunch, or bouquet at a time) a simple kid's beach bucket or small trash receptacle will do. For larger volumes of flowers you might choose a big plastic storage dispenser or 3 - 5 gallon bucket. You can find them in the paint department of a hardware store. Or, you can use any recycled plastic bucket (that held plaster, laundry detergent, or food) once it has been emptied and cleaned. Plastic baskets make great carry-alls for your tools and supplies. To save space use multiples of the same container so they can be stacked and put away when not in use. *Figure 2.*



Figure 1



Figure 2

3. Now that you know how much space your supplies will need, decide where your FHS will be. Do you have storage space in a cupboard, cabinet, laundry room or closet ... someplace out of the way? Or, will you have to keep it out in the open somewhere in your home? *Figure 3.*



Figure 3

4. If you have to keep your FHS supplies in a visible area of your home you can make it attractive and part of your overall décor by placing everything in a basket, box, or storage container that aligns with the style of your home or the room that it's placed in. That way your FHS is out of the way but ready to go the moment you find some bright and cheery blooms that you just can't live without. *Figure 4.*



Figure 4

5. Once you've created your Flower Holding Station you can look for reasons to fill it with an armload of flowers that decorate your home even before you arrange and rearrange them into individual designs and displays. Simply put enough water in your FHS bucket to cover the bottoms of the stems (a few inches) and flower food if you have it (measured as per the packet's instructions). Then chop and drop your flowers into the water and leave them to drink for a few hours. You can even move this Holding Station from room to room. A cool dark room will prevent the flowers from opening fast. A bright sunny room will help them bloom open faster. *Figure 5.*



Figure 5

When you're ready arrange your flowers into a design see **Set Up Essentials #2 "Styling Vase"** for a suggested way to prepare your flowers for use and make them last an incredibly long time.

If you have purchased hydrated flowers and you are ready to style them right away you can skip the Flower Holding Station and go right to the Styling Vase (Set Up Essentials #2)



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02

USING A STYLING VASE

The purpose of a **Styling Vase** is to insure that your flowers continue drinking while you are in the process of arranging them. It offers an opportunity for your flowers to receive a fresh cut and clean water to re-awaken them and promote longevity. It also gives you a chance to inventory them, to see what their characteristics are, and to sort them – for fast and easy designing.

1. Your styling vase can be a plastic utility container that is large and tall enough to hold a typical bundle, bunch, or bouquet of flowers. A large pitcher, pot, or small bucket (maybe from your Flower Holding Station) can also be used as your Styling Vase. Or, you can use a large nicely shaped glass vase if you have a favorite one. In the Flowerhandlers® studio designers use a bucket placed at their work station, to insure the flowers they're working with are always drinking. Your Styling Vase can be pretty or utilitarian, simply functional or decorative according to your preference. *Figure 1.*

2. Remove the packaging from hydrated flowers saving any decorative paper or wrapping for possible later use. Remove any binding (rubber bands, elastics, tape) that is holding the flowers in place. Save the binding material (rubber bands) if possible. Inventory your flowers and remove any broken or damaged petals or leaves from the group.

Strip all foliage from the stems that will go under water when they are placed in your styling vase because submerged leaves will cause bacteria to grow quickly. Foliage that will be above the water line when they go into



Figure 1



Figure 2

your styling vase should remain on the stem.

3. Once the flowers are inspected and the appropriate leaves are removed, cut them individually or in groups with a knife or clippers (whichever you are comfortable with) and place them immediately into your styling vase of water (and flower food if you have it).

With a mixed bouquet sort the flowers and foliage into groups of like materials. With bunches of the same flowers notice if they are different lengths and separate them according to shortest and tallest.

Once they are inventoried, cleaned and sorted you can see exactly what you have to work with. And, it will be easy to decide on the type and style of arrangement you want to make. Now, if you get interrupted by the phone, a child or the doorbell, while you are playing with your flowers, they will be breathing in water - not sucking up air. *Figure 3.*

4. Another approach to a Styling Vase is to make it attractive and use it as a decoration for a few days. In that case once you have inventoried, cleaned and sorted your flowers gather them into your hands starting with the largest and heaviest flowers or stems and evenly distribute the color, texture and height of them into an attractive display – similar to that of a pre-packaged mixed bouquet. *Figure 4.*

5. Once you've gathered all the flowers cut all the stems straight across the bottoms and insert the whole group of blooms into your styling vase. After you've enjoyed this tall display for a day or two you can simply pluck chosen flowers right from this display to make your next creations at your convenience and as you wish. *Figure 5.*

See **TecQ Sheets #1 – #12** for design ideas.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



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03

ARRANGING AND RE-ARRANGING

The value of **arranging and re-arranging** your fresh cut flowers is that they love the attention and will last longer for you. Fresh cuts and fresh water re-awaken them. The shorter stems make it easier for them to drink. Plus – you’ll get the pleasure of playing with them and distributing multiple arrangements room to room throughout the house then watching the flowers expand and come into their full glory from day to day.

Roses were used here but the arrange and rearrange concept works for any long lasting flowers (carnations, alstromeria lilies, chrysanthemums, snapdragons, lilies, stock, gerberas, callas and many others) which will last from one to two weeks by arranging and re-arranging them from one vase to another – reducing the stem length and vase size with each new design.

Day One: These twelve “super market” roses were chopped and dropped into a 12” glass (Flower Holding Station) vase when they were purchased.

1. Day Two: They were cleaned (thorns and lower foliage removed) and separated into shorts and longs. Then they were given a fresh cut and placed in a 9” Styling Vase giving me time to gather some other vases and prepare them to use later in the week.
Figure 1.

2. Day Three: The roses went from the Styling Vase to this 8” vase - for use in a guest room. Measuring and cutting in groups is the fastest, easiest way to make a centerpiece or one-sided design for the home.

Simply gather a set of flowers (6 roses shown here)



Figure 1



Figure 2

aligning their heads to be even. Hold them in front of the vase at the height you want them to be. Measure the desired length of their stems by comparing where the bottom of the vase is as you continue to hold them at the desired height. Cut them as a group with clippers. *Figure 2.*

3. Distribute them evenly around the vase using a styling technique to hold them in place if necessary. Here we used the rubber band technique (*TecQ Sheet #1*) to hold the first set of six roses in place. *Figure 3.*

4. Repeat with another set (six roses shown here) – gathering and aligning the heads, measuring and cutting the stems as a group. Then insert the second set of flowers between the first group of flowers – in a centerpiece or one-sided display as shown here.

Continue until all flowers are used or you are satisfied with the design. This arrangement is a nice size for a side table or console. *Figure 4.*

5. Day Six: The same measure-and-cut-as-a-group process was used three days later to separate the roses into two smaller arrangements – giving them a fresh cut, fresh water, and a fresh new look in a new location.

For arranging and re-arranging flowers, it helps to have a little collection of vases in different sizes and heights available to choose from.

If you don't own multiple vases you can use lots of different containers that are found around the house. Serving bowls, glassware, cleaned condiment jars and bottles will all work for impromptu vases. Just fill with flowers and use as embellishments and accents room-to-room throughout the house. *Figure 5.*

6. The dozen roses was split in half with six placed in a 6" vase and six in a 5" vase. A different styling technique was used for each of the two arrangements. *Figure 6.*

7. An interior wire armature was used in the 6" vase (left). Two sets of three roses were inserted in a coiled deco wire framework to stabilize the design. It's short enough for a small dining table centerpiece.

For the 5" vase (right) two sets of three roses were used again. In this design a free form exterior wire armature



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

was used to hold the flowers in place and add interest to the display. It's great as an accent piece. *Figure 7.*

Wire armatures are easy to create, can be used over and over again, and can be easily stored away. They can add color to your arrangement and make styling flowers fast, fun, simple, and easy when you're in a hurry. See *TecQ Sheets #6 and #7* for more about wire armatures. *Figure 7.*

8. Day Nine: The roses were fading. Some blooms were lost others needed more support. So, they were separated once again, and rearranged into three still smaller vessels. *Figure 8.*

There was no design technique used for the mug (left). Since the Ecuadorian vase (right) was made from a porous material a liner was used to hold the water (see *TecQ Sheet #3* for more about using liners).

In both the mug and the Ecuadorian vase a set of three roses were cut short and distributed around the little vases. Then one rose was placed in the center of the three first insertions.

The flat square bowl (front) was filled with glass stones to hold short blooms in place and to add weight to the container (see *TecQ Sheet #11* for more about design paraphernalia).

The one remaining rose was placed in the flat bowl. The idea of using small stones, marbles, or glass beads is the perfect medium for supporting blooms in shallow vessels when there is no stem.

9. Day Eleven: The flowers are still greeting family members when they pass through the kitchen... *Figure 9.*

10. ... and adding colorful accents around the house even in their last days of beauty – just before having to say goodbye. *Figure 10.*

**Notice the timeline in these arrangements. Then experiment with arranging & re-arranging your own flowers to see if you get more pleasure and longevity from your favorite blooms.*



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



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