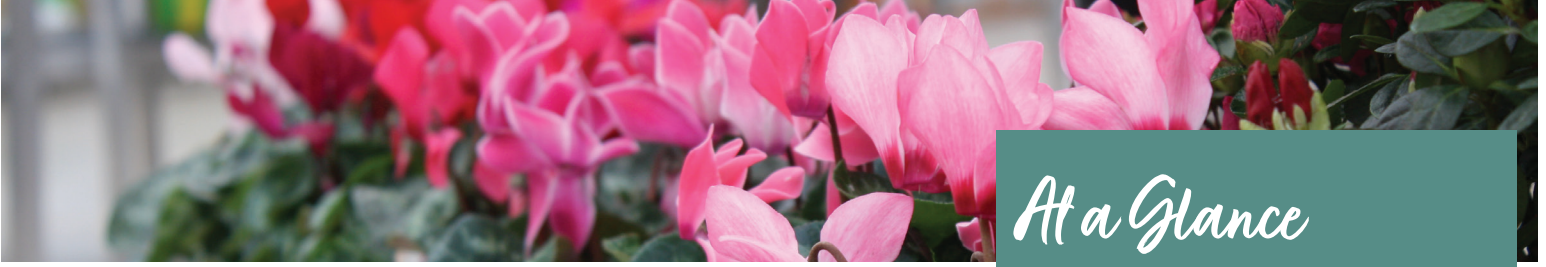


Caring for Blooming Gift Plants



At a Glance

Blooming gift plants are flowering plants meant to provide a quick pop of color, rather than becoming a permanent fixture of a space.

These plants generally maintain a healthy appearance for a few weeks up to a few months. If your plant withers in a matter of days, take note of its environment as well as care practices.

Examples of blooming gift plants: Azaleas, cinerarias, forced bulbs, campanula, and dianthus.

What are Gift Plants?

Some flowering plants provide only a temporary floral display while others are able to take up permanent residency in your space.

Blooming gift plants provide instant pops of color, but usually decline after a few weeks to a few months. Unlike true flowering houseplants, the members of this group will be a temporary fixture in your space. Flowers may last a few months with the exception of bulbs and specialty plants that only last a couple of weeks.

Once flowers fade, the next stage depends on the type of plant and the level of care you're willing to give. Many are discarded, while some can be kept for another year as a houseplant or a patio plant in the summer. They can be difficult to keep alive or rebloom. Bulb plants are usually planted outdoors or stored in a cool, dark location and then replanted. Care for each type of plant varies, so be sure to research your particular plant.

If you're looking for something to live as a permanent feature in your space, you may want to choose a longer-lasting flowering plant. Before purchase, it's best to check whether a blooming plant is a true flowering houseplant or a short-lived gift plant.

Popular Varieties of Gift Plants

A few examples of gift plants: Azaleas, cinerarias, gloxinias, chrysanthemums and tulips. During the dark winter months these provide a welcome splash of color. The forced bulb group provides a spring display weeks earlier than they would naturally. These colorful beauties make excellent gifts!

After a few weeks or months, the flowers will fade and the lower leaves may fall. The plant itself may eventually fade. This is a basic feature of this group of plants. However, flowers fading and leaves falling should not take place within a matter of a few days after bringing the plant home. This may indicate that something is wrong. As a general rule, Blooming plants need bright, indirect sunlight, cool night conditions between 50 and 60° F, no more than 10° warmer during the day, and moderately moist soil. Allow the top 1/3rd of the soil to dry before watering. Warm air can cause the plant to dry out quickly and the blossoms and leaves to wither.

Cool-loving plants

This group includes azaleas, forced bulbs (both outdoor and indoor), calceolaria (Pocket Book Plant), caladium, campanula, chrysanthemum, cineraria, cyclamen, dianthus (carnation), erica (heather), hydrangea, assorted lilies, primula (primrose) and solanum (winter cherry).

Temperature: Cool; 50 to 60° night temperature

Light: Bright light; keep away from direct sunlight. If the plant stops blooming, try increasing the light slightly.

Water: Keep soil moist, but not soggy, at all times. Use the immersion method if the plant dries out completely. Once flowers have faded, allow the soil to dry by 1/3rd of its depth before watering.

Air Humidity: Create a pebble tray using a tray and small rocks or gravel, and pouring enough water into the tray that all rocks are sitting in the water, but the plant is not. Put the plant in the center of the tray on top of the rocks. This will create an aura of humidity when the water in the tray evaporates. If available, you might also try using a humidifier. Misting plants does not have much if any effect on the humidity around the plant, and can actually promote the growth of disease.

Care after flowering: Reduce watering. If the plant is actively growing, begin fertilizing. As individual plant needs vary, it's best to research the type of fertilizer best suited to your particular plant. In general, we recommend an all-purpose 20-20-20 fertilizer at half the recommended strength.

Average warmth plants

This group includes anthurium, begonia, justicia (shrimp plant), bromeliads, capsicum (ornamental pepper), crossandra, cuphea (Hawaiian Heather), episcia (chocolate soldier), eucharis (Amazon lily), exacum (Persian violet), gardenia, fuchsia, gloxinia, hibiscus, jasmine, kalanchoe, lisianthus, miniature rose, and saintpaulia (African violet).

Temperature: Average warmth; minimum 55 to 60°. Some plants require cooler night temperatures in winter.

Light: Bright light; avoid too much direct sun; provide a few hours of morning or evening sun in winter.

Water: Soil should be kept moist, but not soggy, from spring to fall. Allow the soil surface to dry by 1/3rd before watering. Water less frequently in winter.

Air Humidity: These plants prefer some humidity, but do not wet the leaves unless otherwise indicated. Wetting of the leaves can cause powdery mildew on begonia, episcia, and roses. Gardenias and jasmine need higher humidity. Try using a pebble tray or humidifier.

Care after flowering: Each plant needs a specific environment in order to rebloom. Usually, increasing sunlight just a little can encourage the plant to set new flowers. During active growth, use an all-purpose 20-20-20 fertilizer about every other watering at half the recommended strength. It is best to research your specific plant for more information.