

# Add fresh blooms to any and every occasion

(WMS) - There is no missing the inviting presence of fresh-cut flowers. They can be the basis of holiday decorations, set the mood for a moonlight dinner for two or add a sense of elegance to a wedding reception.

Flowers also can set the scene when you are entertaining. From a lavish banquet to an intimate morning brunch, the right flowers are the perfect complement.

The presence of flowers lends a grace to any and every occasion, but you must choose your flowers carefully and condition them so that they will look best for your party.

There are a few things to consider before creating your personalized floral arrangement.

Here are some tips, courtesy of *Malcolm Hillier Entertaining* by Malcolm Hillier.

## TOOLS

For informal displays, you will need a good pair of florists' scissors, a pair of pruners for cutting wood stems, a small, sharp knife for scraping stems, and buckets in which to condition flowers.

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For more complex arrangements, you may need florists' foam, chicken wire, stub wires, wire cutters, florists' gum and prongs.

## FLOWER CHOICE

First decide on the type of arrangement (or arrangements) you want at your party.

Where would you like to display it? How much space is available? What vases or other receptacles do you have? What flowers are in season? Do they

dictate your color scheme or tie in with it?

Low displays are most suitable for the table, but larger bold ones really can impress; either have one on the dining table until guests sit down to eat or place on a side table or mantelpiece.

## CONDITIONING

Buy flowers three days in advance of the occasion, selecting specimens that are just beyond the bud stage, with healthy fresh leaves. Check that stems that have been underwater aren't white or pule and are free of slimy bacteria.

When you return home, prepare all plant material by cutting the ends of the stems at a sharp angle and scraping around each stem up from the base.

Remove any leaves that will be submerged in the final arrangement, and plunge the flowers or foliage into a bucket of water with three or four drops of household bleach added (this inhibits the bacteria that causes plants to rot).

Leave in a cool, light (not sunny) place for at least two hours, but preferably overnight or until buds have opened and you see the arrangement, ideally the day before the event. Keep the buckets in a cool place to prolong the plant material's life.

Once the plants are arranged, change the water regularly, adding a few drops of bleach each time.

Drooping stems are sometimes revived by placing their ends into almost boiling water for five to 10 minutes.

# Give your walls a change of art

(NAPSI) - One of the easiest and quickest ways to change your home decor is wall art.

Hanging a new print or poster, or changing pieces with the seasons, can transform the mood of any room. Decorators say it's also a nice way to make a dramatic difference inexpensively.

To do this, many consumers are turning to the Internet for home decorating ideas and solutions because of its convenience, cost effectiveness and simplicity.

"Web sites like Art.com are a great resource for choosing and purchasing wall art," said Melissa Andron of Realm Design Studio.

"The site is ideal as a virtual gallery for determining individual style. Plus, with their online custom framing, it's an easy and economical way to create the look and quality everyone is searching for without breaking the budget."

Internet sites such as Art.com resolve any doubt surrounding the selection of wall art. They provide visitors with art as unique as each customer.

Art.com, for example, provides visitors with an extensive

selection that is easy to navigate with an alphabetical inventory of artists and subjects, and a list of the 100 most popular selections.

The option for viewing and buying prints with a variety of frames eliminates the guesswork by allowing the consumer to quickly judge which frame and mat looks best with the print.

The site even offers decorating tips for shoppers with advice on how to set the mood in a room and how to group prints with furniture.

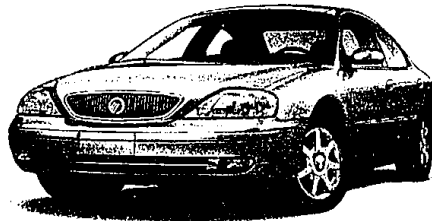
Gift certificates from Art.com allow recipients to choose their own gift at their convenience.

The site offers consumers more than 1.4 trillion product combinations in a friendly, informative and easy-to-navigate shopping venue.

Decorators, students, and enthusiasts of all kinds can find just what they're looking for, experiment with matting and framing options, and get delivery in days of ready-to-hang art work.

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