

Move flowers picked in midday heat into shade as soon as possible, then put their stems in clean water. Give them time in a cool place to take up water before arranging them, and expect some delicate blooms to recover better than others.

Get the stems into water

Take a clean bucket or jug of water into the garden before you start cutting. Set it in the shade, close enough that stems do not lie on a hot path while you gather the rest. Put each stem into the water soon after cutting it.

Use cool or room temperature water rather than ice water. The aim is to give the flowers access to water and shelter from heat, not to shock them with an abrupt change. Keep the bucket out of direct sun as you work.

Clean and trim each stem

Bring the flowers indoors or to another cool, shaded spot. Remove leaves that would sit below the waterline, since submerged leaves can decay and make the water dirty. Leave the upper leaves in place if you want them in the arrangement.

With clean, sharp scissors or snips, trim a little from the bottom of each stem. A slanted cut makes it easier to see that you have made a fresh cut. Put the stems straight back into clean water.

- Use a clean container with enough water to cover the lower stems.
- Keep petals and foliage above the waterline.
- Separate crowded stems so air can move around the flowers.
- Remove any badly damaged or decaying material.

Let the flowers rest

Leave the bucket in a cool place away from direct sunlight and warm appliances. A shaded utility room or a cool corner of the kitchen can work. Give the flowers several hours to drink before you judge how well they have recovered.

Check the water level during that time. Thirsty stems can use a surprising amount, especially if the bucket is small. Top it up with clean water as needed, and avoid handling the flower heads while they rest.

Arrange and watch for changes

Once the stems feel firmer, arrange them in a clean vase with fresh water. Keep the vase away from a sunny windowsill or a hot stove. Change the water if it becomes cloudy, and remove fading flowers or leaves as you notice them.

Some flowers may stay limp after a long spell in the heat. They may have lost too much water to recover fully, so set them aside rather than crowding the vase. Next time, cutting in the cool of early morning can give the stems a better start.

Questions about heat stressed flowers

Should I put wilted flowers in the refrigerator?

A cool room is a simple first choice. Refrigerators can be too cold for some flowers, and fruit stored inside can release ethylene gas that shortens flower life.

Can every wilted flower recover?

No. Fresh water and shade can help, but recovery depends on the flower and how much heat and water loss it has endured.

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