

## Twelve Tips for Selecting Cut Flowers

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| <p><b>1</b> Flowers passing through the Dutch flower auction are classified as A1, A2 or B1. Each stem is examined by opening stage, bud size, shape, colour, strength and straightness. Quality also depends on storage time and conditions.</p>                         | <p><b>2</b> Flowers in season will be stronger, last longer and cost less.</p>   |
| <p><b>3</b> Choose a good source by checking that buckets are clean and contain water to the right depth. Bulb flowers and soft-stemmed flowers should be in shallow water. Some bulb flowers, such as <i>Narcissus</i>, are happy for a couple of days out of water.</p> | <p><b>4</b> Avoid flowers with brown marks — likely a sign of botrytis, a rapidly spreading fungal disease. Pale-coloured roses and <i>Eustoma</i> (lisianthus) are particularly vulnerable. Remove all affected petals and check flowers regularly.</p> |
| <p><b>5</b> Flowers displayed outside a shop or garage are vulnerable to damaging draughts, which can shorten their life.</p>   | <p><b>6</b> Avoid flowers with translucent or crêpey petals — they may have been kept too long or become too cold in a temperature-controlled store.</p>   |
| <p><b>7</b> Fresh flowers should have firm green foliage with no yellowing.</p>   | <p><b>8</b> Most flowers that show no colour are unlikely to open. This is particularly applicable to <i>Paeonia</i>, <i>Freesia</i> and all buds.</p>   |
| <p><b>9</b> If handled badly, cellophane or wrap can be pulled tight around the heads so flowers sweat and deteriorate. A good outlet will remedy this without delay.</p>   | <p><b>10</b> Quality flowers are often heavier than lesser-grade ones as they are well hydrated. Lighter, spindly flowers may be offcuts, side shoots, or cut when insufficiently mature.</p>  |
| <p><b>11</b> Double flowers will last longer than single flowers.</p>   | <p><b>12</b> Your eyes are the best guide. Study the flowers you wish to obtain rather than grabbing a colour or a must-have bloom. Be flexible and focused — choose those of the best quality.</p>  |