K-State horticulture expert shares tips on caring for Valentine’s roses

Proper care can extend the life of the favored holiday flower

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The calendar indicates that love will soon be in the air, and for those fortunate to receive Valentine’s Day roses, Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham has some guidelines for extending the life of the flowers.

“For floral arrangements,” he said, “keep the vase filled or floral foam soaked with warm water. Add fresh, warm water daily. If the water turns cloudy, replace it immediately.”

Upham suggests re-cutting stems by removing 1-2 inches with a sharp knife, while holding the stem under water.

The roses should be kept in a cool spot – 65-67 degrees Fahrenheit, Upham said – and away from direct sunlight, heating or cooling vents. He also suggests avoiding areas under ceiling fans or near radiators.

“If a rose starts to wilt, remove it from the arrangement and re-cut the stem under water,” he said. “Submerge the entire rose in warm water. The rose should revive in 1-2 hours.”

For loose stem roses, Upham shared the following tips:

- If you can’t get your flowers in a food solution right away, keep them in a cool place.
- Fill a clean, deep vase with water and add the flower food obtained from the florist. Follow directions on the package.
- Remove leaves that will be below the water line. Leaves in water will promote bacterial growth.
- Re-cut stems under water with a sharp knife and place the flowers in the vase solution.
Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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K-State Research and Extension local offices, www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/stateandareamaps.html

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