



LOVING AND LIVING WITH PLANTS
BY LAILA KARIM



FLOWERS

that beautify the home and soul

Flowers are a veritable gift of nature, with power to change a scene, decor and a person's mood despite their delicate fragility. Using flowers into everyday life is often peaceful. Most of us have read the quote – if you have two pennies, spend one on food and the other on a flower. But most of us now would rather have a cola than buy a flower!

We only think of buying flowers on special occasions like weddings, Eids and other personal days of happiness, or of course, the national days of mourning.

In the western world, flowers are for everyday enjoyment. While people shop, they also shop for flowers along with daily groceries. Just think about the same here! We think flowers are expensive, and while that is true, you will find the right one at the right price if you make your visits regular.

Now, the practical aspects of a flower aficionado's pursuits include not the purveying of nature's bounty only, but also the very real costs and work involved in it. A good time to buy flowers seems to be the weekend, since there is more time to check the quality of the produce at the shops, as well as tend to those once back home.

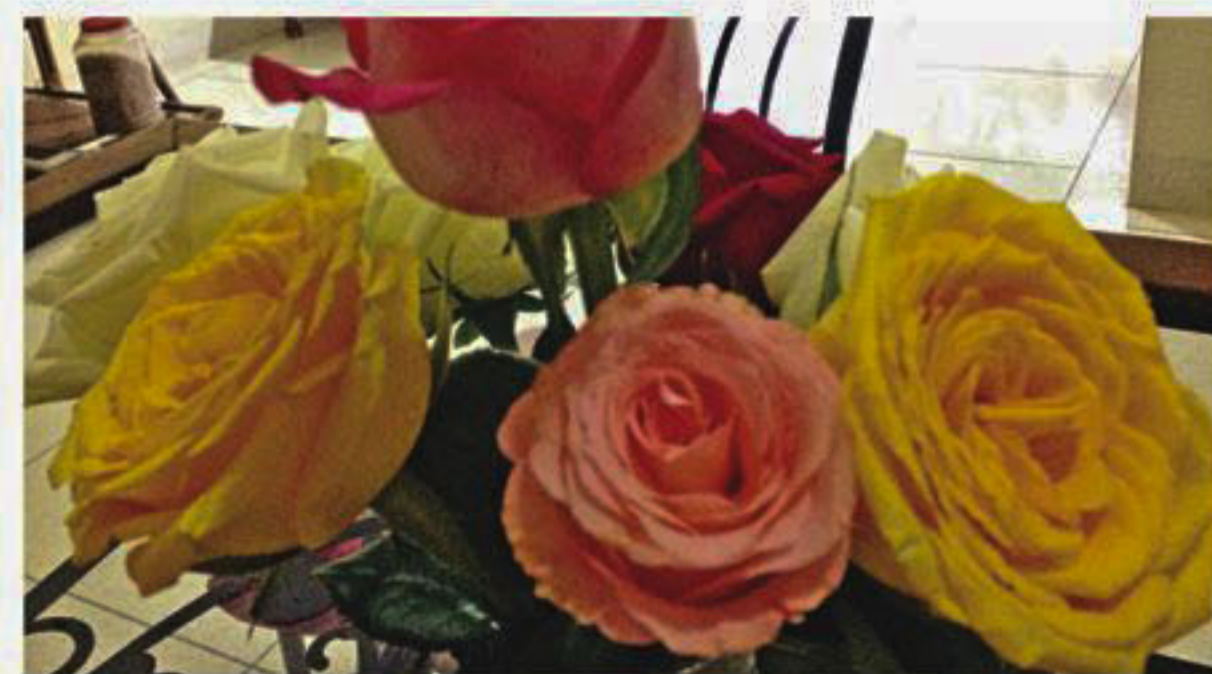
The first step is to ask the florist for help – ask how you can keep the flower fresh at your home environment for long. Check the freshness of the flowers by closely looking at the bottom of the blossom and see whether the layers of the petals are intact or if some are missing. After bringing the flowers home, cut the stems at an angle before putting them in fresh water.

Use a sharp knife instead of scissors - cut a quarter of an inch off the bottom of the stems, at an angle, cut off the leaves below the water line as these breed bacteria, and do not forget to remove the wilted and damaged petals and leaves regularly.

Remember, the cut flowers are like special members in your family, so treat well, and feed well too!

Change the flowers' water every two to three days, and use some floral preservative.

What kind of flower preservatives, you wonder? You will find it in your refrigerator – the 7 Up can! A little bit of the soft drink, or some drops of vinegar, or a pinch of bleach from the laundry stock can be used to mix with the water of the vase. Do not forget to



wash/sterilise the vase with soap when you change the water, otherwise the bacteria will contaminate the water and infect the stems.

About fragrance – it is true that flowers are grown and bred for long stems and bigger size and also for brighter colours and long shelf life. So, except our home grown flowers, it is not usual to find good fragrant flowers available on sale. Before you set the flowers in containers/vases, put those into a

water bucket so that the stems have no chance to dry out.

SOME TIPS

Fruits are the first line enemy of cut flowers as they emit ethylene gas. So remember to keep your flower vase far away from your fruit basket. Also be careful about your allergy issues as some of us are allergic to some flowers and plants.

While placing the vases, remember that



the days are hot and the flowers should be kept away from sunlight. Please note that 'cheap is always costly'.

Get good quality flowers from shops where shelves are constantly refilled in with new supplies. Remember to re-cut the stems every second or third day, like when changing the water. If you have your own garden – pick flowers early in the morning or late in the afternoon and select flowers

that are yet to bloom.

Regarding arrangement - think of something out of the box. In the past, arrangement of flowers was a specialised job for designated staff in many a household. Nowadays, we tend to do it ourselves. Depending on the size and colour of the flowers, I just apply my own judgement in placing them around each other.

I just pick the container/s from the kitchen shelf, selecting anything that catches my fancy at the moment. I may go from the empty jam bottles to the old tea pots or any kind of jars or even curry bowls. The petals look really good in rice plates or single colour bowls.

KNOW THE PRICE

Currently Dhaka city florists are selling oriental lilies for Tk 200 to Tk 250 per stick containing three flowers and a bud or so.

Chrysanthemums are for Tk 120 per stick, with 6/7 flowers on a single stick, and carnations are for Tk 40 each. Gerberas are for Tk 25 each, roses for Tk 5 to 50 (depending on quality, colour, and origin) and orchids per stick are sold for about Tk 50. The scented dolonchapa bunch is sold for Tk 100, and local lotus buds are sold at Tk 20 per piece.

For adding value to your money, find a good florist shop, preferably on your route of regular travel, and visit the place frequently. The florist will be happy to help you with the best quality and price and give you proper attention!

Please feel free to send emails and share your thoughts, feedbacks, and photos of your garden, or tell your story; or, ask questions on gardening issues. Send emails to lifestyleds@yahoo.com

Photo: Laila Karim

