



crocosmia



Super Floral Retailing has created this page for the education of store-level employees. To download a reprintable PDF, please go to www.superfloraretailing.com and select "Current Issue."



Photo courtesy of The Sun Valley Group

Crocosmia—Montbretia

BOTANICAL NAME

Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora
(krow-KOZ-mee-uh
krow-koz-mee-i-FLO-ra)

COMMON NAME

Montbretia (mont-BREE-zha)

DESCRIPTION

These cormous perennials have leafless, arching, branched stems (up to 4 feet in length) with two-ranked "combs" of brightly colored, tubular blooms (up to 2 inches in length) with star-shaped "faces" at their ends. Leaves, which fan from the

bases of the plants and are often included in flower bunches, are narrow (1/4 inch to 1 inch wide), sword-shaped and "pleated" (parallel veined).

COLORS

Crocosmias' colors range from crimson/scarlet to red-orange to orange to yellow.

VASE LIFE

With proper care from farm to florist, *Crocosmias* can provide seven to 14 days of vase life at the consumer level; however, individual blossom drop will occur about three days after flower opening.

availability

Depending on variety, as well as sourcing both domestic and foreign growers, flowering *Crocosmias* can be found year-round. Peak season, however, is April/May through October/November. *Crocosmia* seed pods, generally green or reddish-brown, are available through the December holiday season.

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Carefully remove *Crocosmias* from packaging, and remove any bindings, being cautious to avoid damaging any open blossoms. Cut at least 1 inch from the bottoms of the stems with a sharp knife or pruner; immediately dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution; then place the flowers into a clean container partially filled with properly mixed, lukewarm (100 F to 110 F) flower-food solution.

quality checklist

WHEN TO BUY Purchase *Crocosmias* when a few of the lower-most blooms are open and possibly even shriveled and fallen off. If cut too tight, flowers may not open; on the other hand, open blossoms can be damaged easily during transportation.

STOP THE MOLD *Crocosmias* can mold quickly without plenty of air circulation, so remove any packing sleeves immediately upon the flowers' arrival.

REFRIGERATION Store *Crocosmias* in a floral cooler at 33 F to 35 F.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Crocosmias* are moderately sensitive to ethylene gas, so make sure your flowers are treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the farm level or during transportation. Ethylene will cause the delicate florets to shrivel and fall prematurely.

WATER Check the flower-food solution level daily, and replenish as needed. Recut the stems every two or three days.



Photo courtesy of The Sun Valley Group

Crocosmia pods—Montbretia pods

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflife.org
Dictionary of Plant Names, by Allen J. Coombes
Florists' Review
Hortus Third, by Liberty Hyde Bailey and
Ethel Zoe Bailey
Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners,
by William T. Stearn

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus name "*Crocosmia*" comes from the Greek words "*krokos*" (saffron) and "*osme*" (smell). Dried *Crocosmia* flowers, especially when placed in warm water, have a strong saffron smell. The common name "montbretia" is an homage to Antoine François Ernest Conquebert de Montbret (1781-1801), one of the botanists accompanying Napoleon's invasion of Egypt from 1798 to 1801, where he died.

FAMILY Members of the *Iridaceae* (*Iris*) family, *Crocosmias* are closely related to *Crocuses*, *Freesias*, *Gladioli*, *Irises*, *Ixias* and *Watsonias*.

HOME SWEET HOME *Crocosmias* are native to South Africa.

life after life

■ *Crocosmia* flowers and foliage can be air-dried by simply hanging small bunches of opening flowers upside down in a warm, dry location for several days. Circulating air is a must to prevent molding. These flowers should retain their color well, and the narrow foliage will add extra interest and texture to your dried arrangements.

■ *Crocosmia* seed pods, which occur after flowering is finished, are trendy, textural botanicals. They are easily made appealing to the youth market by spray-painting them in an array of bright and fashion-forward colors. **sfr**