



Photo courtesy of Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center (NFBC)



Hyacinthus orientalis
Hyacinth, Dutch hyacinth,
Common hyacinth, Garden hyacinth

BOTANICAL NAME

Hyacinthus orientalis
(hy-a-SIN-thus or-ee-en-TAL-is)

COMMON NAMES

Hyacinth, Dutch hyacinth,
Common hyacinth, Garden hyacinth

DESCRIPTION

Hyacinth inflorescences comprise fragrant, waxy bell-shaped florets in large spikes on the upper 4 to 6 inches of thick, fleshy and leafless stems (scapes), which range from 8 to 12 inches in length. Cut hyacinths typically bear 60 to 70 florets.

COLORS

Hyacinths are available in a range of pinks (pale pink to hot pink), blues (light blue to

dark blue and blue-violet), and violets (lavender to dark purple) as well as red, salmon/peach/apricot/coral, yellow and white/ivory.

VASE LIFE

Cut hyacinths typically last from three to seven days at the consumer level, depending on their care, their maturity at the time of sale and the environmental conditions in which they are displayed. These flowers should be sold within two days of arrival in your department.

AVAILABILITY

Cut hyacinths are available from November through May from both domestic and foreign growers.

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Unpack hyacinths immediately upon their arrival. Remove all stem bindings (usually rubber bands or tape) as well as any loose leaves. Then thoroughly rinse the stems under tepid (100 F) running water to remove any sand or silt from the stems.

The latest information regarding cutting hyacinth stems is that the stems should *not* be recut. In Holland, for example, hyacinths are harvested with their bulbs attached; the bulbs are later removed by a "coring" machine. This means that the lowest part of a hyacinth stem (basal plate) is the center interior of the bulb. Research shows that leaving the basal plates intact improves water uptake and will extend vase life. If you choose to recut hyacinth stems during processing, remove as little of the stem as possible—preferably no more than 1/8 inch.

FLOWER-FOOD SOLUTION For best results, place hyacinths into a nutrient solution formulated especially for bulb flowers (e.g., Chrysal Clear Professional Bulb T-Bag™ or Floralife® Bulb Flower Food). When these flowers are cut from their bulbs, they experience hormone imbalances, and bulb-flower foods contain—in addition to the ingredients in standard flower-food solutions—"replacement" hormones. They also

have a lower concentration of sugar, which can aggravate leaf yellowing. If using a bulb-flower-specific solution is not possible, place hyacinths into a standard flower-food solution. Whichever flower-food solution you use, prepare it with *cold nonfluoridated* water.

REFRIGERATION After processing hyacinths, immediately place them into a floral refrigerator at 35 F to 41 F, and allow them to hydrate for at least two hours before selling or arranging them. Except for design time, keep these flowers refrigerated until sold or delivered. At this stage, some care and handling experts recommend wrapping these flowers in damp paper or placing them into sleeves to encourage straight stems. In any case, position them upright in their storage containers.

Sell cut hyacinths within two days of receipt. Flowers held for more than two days lose at least a day of vase life for each day they are held beyond the two days, and prolonged refrigeration also can cause chilling injury.

CARE EXTRA Change the flower-food solution every day, and advise customers to change it every other day.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY Cut hyacinths are not particularly sensitive to ethylene gas; howev-

er, take precautions to keep ethylene levels in your department as low as possible.

DRY STORAGE Cut hyacinths can be stored dry in a floral refrigerator for up to three days.

CONSUMER ACTION Inform customers that leaving the basal plates intact (not cutting the stems), changing the vase water at least every other day, lightly misting the blossoms daily and cooling the blossoms at night will help to extend their lasting quality and encourage every floret to open.

purchasing checklist

- Buy cut hyacinths when the flower spikes are showing some color but before any florets separate from the cluster and open; however, buds should appear swollen.
- Make sure flower spikes and stems are turgid and fairly straight.
- Examine bunches for bruising, browning or yellowing, or rot or mold on blooms, stems and leaves.
- These flowers are generally sold in five-stem bunches. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflife.org
Hortus Third, by Liberty Hyde Bailey and
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Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners,
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