



christmas bush



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Photo courtesy of the Australian Flower Export Council (AFEC)

Ceratopetalum gummiferum
Christmas bush, Festival bush,
New South Wales Christmas bush

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Immediately upon arrival in your store, remove Christmas bush from the shipping boxes, and remove packaging and stem bindings. Next remove all leaves that would fall below the water line in the storage container(s), and recut the stems with a sharp knife or pruner, removing at least 1 inch of stem. Immediately after cutting, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution, then place them into containers half-filled with warm (100 F to 110 F), properly proportioned flower-food solution. The hydration solution will help the flowers absorb water after being shipped or stored dry.

REFRIGERATION After processing, place Christmas bush into a floral cooler at 33 F to 35 F, and allow the stems to hydrate for at least two hours before using or selling them.

purchasing tips

Buy Christmas bush when two-thirds of the flowers are developed. Shake the bunches to make sure there is no shedding. Also check for signs of wilt, bruising and rot.

BOTANICAL NAME

Ceratopetalum gummiferum
(ser-at-oh-PET-al-um gum-MIF-er-um)
(also ker-at-oh-PET-al-um)

COMMON NAMES

Christmas bush or Festival bush in the U.S.; New South Wales Christmas bush in Australia and other parts of the world.

DESCRIPTION

Christmas bush inflorescences display masses of red sepals, which are commonly mistaken for flowers. The true flowers have small white petals and are relatively inconspicuous (see photo at bottom of page). As they mature, the sepals (four or five) enlarge and turn red, appearing flowerlike and showy. The foliage is also attractive;

new growth is often pink or bronze. The shiny leaves have "toothed" edges. Christmas bush plants are shrublike trees.

COLORS

The most common color is red, but these flowers are also available in pink, rose and purplish-red varieties.

VASE LIFE

With proper care, these vibrant flowers can last for up to two weeks.

AVAILABILITY

Christmas bush is available from U.S. growers mostly during the spring and summer months (April through September) and from Australian growers from November through January. Check availability with your suppliers in advance of need.



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CARE EXTRA Provide good air circulation, high humidity, light and flower food to keep these botanicals looking their best.

CONSUMER ACTION Advise customers to recut the stems and change the water every two or three days and to keep these flowers away from direct sunlight and other sources of heat.



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fun facts

TIMMM-BERRR In addition to being cultivated in Australia and throughout the Pacific region for their flowers, *Ceratopetalum* trees are valued for their light wood, which is used for paneling and cabinetry.

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus name *Ceratopetalum* comes from the Greek words "keras," meaning "horn," and "petalon," which means "petal," referring to the hornlike shape of the sepals. The species epithet *gummiferum* refers to the gum that exudes from the bark of the plants.

FAMILY MATTERS *Ceratopetalum* is a member of the *Cunoniaceae* (*Cunonia*) family. Relatives include *Ackama*, *Callicoma*, *Geissois* and *Weinmannia*—plants native to Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and New Caledonia that are not widely known in the U.S.

HOME SWEET HOME *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* is native to southeastern Australia, particularly the coastal forests of the state of New South Wales. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
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