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centaurea



Centaurea cyanus
Bachelors-button, Cornflower

BOTANICAL NAME

Centaurea cyanus
(sen-tah-REE-a or sen-TAR-ee-a cy-AN-us)

COMMON NAMES

Cornflower, Bachelors-button, Blue-bottle

DESCRIPTION

Centaureas have flat-topped blossoms that resemble thistles. They have slender stems covered with gray-green, spiny-toothed foliage.

COLORS

Centaurea colors include blue, mauve, crimson, rose-pink, purple, white and yellow. Blue is the most common color.

VASE LIFE

The flowers will last from seven to 10 days, with proper care.

AVAILABILITY

These flowers are available year-round, with peak availability from March through August.

vase-life extenders

REFRIGERATION *Centaureas* can be stored in floral coolers at 32 F to 36 F.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Centaureas'* sensitivity to ethylene gas is low.

PETAL DROP Spray the blossoms with an antitranspirant to help prevent shattering.

quality checklist

BLOOMS Purchase *Centaureas* when the buds are showing one-fourth inch of color. Open blossoms won't last as long, and they may suffer damage during transportation.

STEMS AND FOLIAGE Watch for bruised or yellowing foliage or any evidence of rotted stems.

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus name, "*Centaurea*," is from the Greek word "*ken-taur*," for "centaur." In Greek mythology, centaurs were a race of creatures that were half man and half horse. The epithet name "*cyanus*" means "blue." The common name cornflower comes from the plants' tendency to invade cornfields.

FAMILY *Centaureas* are members of the extensive Asteraceae, or Compositae, family. The family includes marigold (*Tagetes*), Gerbera (Transvaal daisy), sunflower (*Helianthus*) and chrysanthemum (*Dendranthema*) as well as many common weeds and wildflowers.

HOME SWEET HOME *Centaureas* are native to the Mediterranean region, the Middle East and

the United Kingdom, where they once were considered a troublesome weed. Efforts to eradicate them from cultivated crop fields nearly led to their extinction in England. Efforts to restore them to their natural habitat have been successful.

HISTORY *Centaureas* are prominent in the Victorian "Language of Flowers," symbolizing hope, love, blessedness and celibacy. Young single girls wore the blooms as a sign of availability. *Centaureas* originally were brought to America from France, where they were important in folk medicine as a treatment for eye problems. In addition, the flowers once were pulverized to make blue food coloring for use in pastry making and watercolor paints. **sfr**

of note

DESIGN TIPS *Centaureas* are versatile flowers that are excellent choices for vase arrangements, hand-tied bouquets, boutonnières, corsages and hair flowers. *Centaureas'* hollow stems sometimes need a little extra support, or they may collapse. To strengthen them, insert a fine wire up the hollow stems and into the flower base.

DRYING Some *Centaurea* blooms will dry nicely. To dry, select several stems, and band them together in small bunches. Hang them upside down in a well-ventilated, warm, dry space for about a week.



Photo courtesy of the California Cut Flower Commission

C. cyanus
Bachelors-button,
Cornflower



Photo courtesy of the California Cut Flower Commission

C. macrocephala
Globe cornflower,
Yellow/Golden Cornflower



Photo courtesy of the Flower Council of Holland

C. cyanus
Bachelors-button,
Cornflower

Some information provided by:
A. Repetto Nursery, Inc.; Half Moon Bay, Calif.
Chain of Life Network®
www.chainoflifeflowernetwork.org

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