

# cut flower of the month gladiolus



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Gladiolus  
Grandiflorus Group  
Sword lily



Gladiolus Nanus Group  
Miniature sword lily,  
Miniature Gladiolus,  
Butterfly Gladiolus

## BOTANICAL NAME

*Gladiolus* spp.

(glad-ee-O-lus)

(Plural: *Gladioli*, *Gladioluses*, *Gladiolus*)

## COMMON NAMES

Sword lily, Corn flag

**Note:** The term "gladiola" is often—but mistakenly—used as a common name for *Gladiolus*, which can sound like "gladiolas." In formal English, "gladiola" and "gladiolas" are not recognized words.

## DESCRIPTION

The flower spikes of traditional large-flowered *Gladioli* (Grandiflorus hybrids) typically have 10 to 16 funnel-shaped blooms (and buds), in alternating facings, mostly on one side of 3- to 4-foot-long stems. Blossoms often have ruffle-edged petals.

Miniature *Gladioli* (a.k.a. butterfly *Gladioli*) are known botanically as *Gladiolus* Nanus Group, which includes *G. x colvillei* (kol-VIL-ee-eye). The flower spikes usually have no more than seven blooms, which often have blotched colorations and ruffly

petal edges. Stems typically are less than 24 inches long.

*Gladioli* leaves are long and sword shaped and are enwrapped around the stem ends and each other.

## COLORS

*Gladioli* are available in a wide range of reds, oranges, yellows, greens and violets—every hue except blue. Bicolor varieties also are available.

## VASE LIFE

Six to 10 days is the typical vase life for cut *Gladioli*, depending on variety, care and stage of maturity at the time of sale.

## AVAILABILITY

*Gladioli* are available year-round from U.S. and Holland growers. Depending on location, some growers' production spans May through December while others produce from around November through May.

## vase-life extenders

**PROCESSING** Unpack *Gladioli* immediately upon their arrival, and check flower quality.

Next, recut stem ends with a sharp blade, removing at least 1 inch of stem. Immediately after cutting, dip or place stem ends into a hydration solution to help the flowers absorb water more quickly and easily, then place them into a flower-food solution prepared with nonfluoridated water.

(*Gladioli* are extremely sensitive to fluoride in water, which can cause deterioration of petal edges, failure of florets to open and develop normally, "burning" of the bud/floret sheath, and yellowing or darkening of leaf edges.)

**REFRIGERATION** Experts used to recommend storing *Gladioli* (especially Florida-grown *Gladioli*) at 40 F to 45 F to prevent chill damage to the tips of the florets, but more recent research shows these flowers can be refrigerated safely at 33 F to 35 F. Allow them to hydrate for at least two hours before selling or arranging them. Except for design time, keep these flowers refrigerated until they're sold or delivered.

**CARE EXTRAS** Check flower-food solution level daily; *Gladioli* are heavy drinkers.

*Gladioli* are geotropic, which means that stem tips curve upward in response to the forces of gravity, so place these flowers upright in their storage containers. Refrigerating *Gladioli* at 33 F to 35 F also lessens this geotropic response.

Many florists remove immature buds at the tips of the flower spikes, in an attempt to help lower buds open fully by preventing the distribution of nutrients to upper buds that likely will never open. The effectiveness of this technique, however, has never been supported by scientific research.

Some florists also remove lower flowers as they fade, in an effort to help upper flower buds open. Research shows that this action, in fact, reduces upper flower buds' ability to open.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Ethylene does not affect open *Gladiolus* florets, but it can cause buds to shrivel and prevent them from opening.

**CONSUMER ACTION** Provide consumers with packets of flower food, so they can change the nutrient solution in their containers every other day or so. Advise them to recut the stems, as well, removing at least one-half inch of stem, and to display *Gladioli* out

of direct sunlight, away from air/heat vents and out of cold drafts. Encourage consumers to place the flowers in the coolest room at night to prolong vase life.

## purchasing tips

- Buy cut *Gladioli* when color is visible in the lowest one to five flower buds. With some varieties, the first floret should be at least three-fourths open. If *Gladioli* are cut too tight, the flower buds might never open, without additional care procedures.
- Check bloom spikes, stems and leaves for bruising, browning, yellowing, gray mold (*Botrytis*) and rot.

## fun facts

(See "Blooming Plant of the Month: *Gladiolus*" on Page 20.)

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