



Super Floral Retailing has created this page for the education of store-level employees. To download a reprintable PDF, please go to [www.superfloralretailing.com](http://www.superfloralretailing.com) and select "Current Issue."

# heath



Photo courtesy of California Cut Flower Commission

*Erica persoluta*—Heath

### BOTANICAL NAME

*Erica* spp. (AIR-i-ka)

### COMMON NAME

Heath

### DESCRIPTION

Heath (*Erica* spp.) is often mistakenly called heather (*Calluna* spp.), a related genus of similar-looking flowers. Heath has spikes of tiny bell-shaped flowers that grow in dense clusters. The spikes are usually 8 to 12 inches long, and some varieties are much longer. The foliage is tiny and

needlelike. Heath grows as a woody shrub and is frequently used as a line filler material in arrangements.

### COLORS

Hues include pink, purple, red and white.

### VASE LIFE

With proper care, heath can last from seven to 14 days.

### AVAILABILITY

Heath is available domestically in the fall, winter and spring. It is increasingly available year-round from international markets.

## vase-life extenders

**PRESERVING** Spray the blossoms with an antitranspirant to help prevent shattering and preserve the integrity and color of the flowers during the drying process, for which these flowers are well-suited.

**REFRIGERATION** Heath can be stored in a floral cooler at 34 F to 38 F.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Some heath varieties are sensitive to ethylene gas. Check with your supplier to make sure your flowers were treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the grower or transportation level.

**WATER** Check the water level daily, and add warm flower-food solution as needed. Recut the stems every two or three days to ensure effective water uptake.

## quality checklist

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR** Purchase heath when the blossoms on the stems are half open. Blossoms that are fully open might not last as long and can suffer damage when they are transported. Flowers still in bud will have difficulty opening. Watch for shedding, bruised or yellowing foliage, or any evidence of rot or mold on the stems.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** "Erica" is Greek for "ereike" (heather) and "ereiko" (to break). An infusion from the leaves was reputed to break bladder stones.

**FAMILY** Heath is a member of the *Ericaceae* family. Relatives include heather (*Calluna*), azaleas (*Rhododendron*) and salal (*Gaultheria shallon*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** Most *Erica* species are native to South Africa, but they have been naturalized in many parts of Europe and Asia.



Photo courtesy of California Cut Flower Commission

*E. melanthera*—Heath



*E. melanthera*—Heath

## of note

**DRYING TIPS** Some heath varieties 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. Some varieties also can be dried by allowing the vase water to evaporate. These flowers usually retain their natural colors well, but if they fade, aerosol or liquid color tools can be applied lightly to refresh the blooms. **sfr**

Some information provided by:

A. Repetto Nursery, Inc., Half Moon Bay, Calif.

Botany.com, [www.botany.com](http://www.botany.com)

Chain of Life Network®, [www.chainoflifenetwrok.org](http://www.chainoflifenetwrok.org)

The Heather Society, [www.users.zetnet.co.uk/heather](http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/heather)

Reach "Cut Flower of the Month" writer Steven W. Brown, AIFD, at [sbfloral@aol.com](mailto:sbfloral@aol.com) or (415) 239-3140.