

liatris

BOTANICAL NAME

Liatris spicata (ly-A-tris spee-kah-ta)

COMMON NAMES

Blazing star, Gay-feather,
Button snakeroot

DESCRIPTION

These cut flowers form slender, 6- to 10-inch-tall spikes with needlelike petals. The stems can grow as long as 32 inches.

COLORS

*Liatris*es are most often found in hues of violet, from deep purple to lavender. Pink, rose and white varieties are available, too.

VASE LIFE

With proper care and handling, *Liatris*es should last from six to 14 days.

varieties

Popular varieties include 'Floristan Purple', 'Floristan White', 'Gloriosa' (purple), 'September Glory' (purple) and 'White Spires'.

availability

*Liatris*es are available year-round.

vase-life extenders

REFRIGERATION Store the flowers in a floral cooler at 33 F to 35 F, at a humidity level between 90 percent and 95 percent.

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

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Liatris*es have a low sensitivity to ethylene gas.

PROCESSING Treat *Liatris*es with a bud-opening solution during processing. Doing so will increase the number of florets that open on the spikes and the overall vase life of the flowers.



Photo: California Cut Flower Commission

L. SPICATA

quality checklist

BLOOMS Avoid purchasing spikes with more than three-quarters of the blooms already opened.

FOLIAGE Botrytis and water stress will cause leaf yellowing and reduced life.

of note

DESIGN TIPS Alone in a vase or blended with other flowers, these linear stems make a dramatic statement. The florets bloom all around the stems, so they are excellent choices for arrangements that are to be viewed from all sides.

CONSUMER CARE TIPS Advise customers to display these blossoms in as cool a location as possible, out of direct sunlight and away from heat sources. If possible, they should put the flowers in the coldest rooms at night and mist them for longer enjoyment.

CAUTION There have been reports of florists suffering from contact dermatitis with exposure to *Liatris*es. If problems occur, wear gloves when processing and designing with the flowers.



LIATRIS

Photo: Associfloras, The Colombian Association of Flower Exporters

fun facts

MEANING The species name "*spicata*" comes from the Latin "*spica*" for "spike."

FAMILY *Liatris* is a member of the Asteraceae (formerly Compositae) family. It is a cousin to many other important floral crops including chrysanthemums (*Dendranthema*), cornflowers (*Centaurea*), Asters, Zinnias, Gerberas and Dahlias.

ORIGINS *Liatris*es are native to the meadows and marshes of North America, including areas of Canada, Florida and Colorado. U.S. supplies are commercially grown primarily in California and Central and South America.

IDEAL FOR DRYING *Liatris*es are suitable for drying and are often sold as dried bunches. The flowers can be air-dried by hanging them upside down in a well-ventilated area at 70 F to 80 F for two to four weeks. To refresh and soften them, place them in a floral refrigerator 24 hours before use. The humidity will leave them softened, and there will be far less damage during designing.

UNUSUAL BLOOMER Unlike most linear flowers, which open from the bottoms to the tops of the spikes, the top florets of *Liatris*es open first, and blooming progresses downward. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Año Nuevo Flowers Inc., Pescadero, Calif.
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenetworg.org
The Society of American Florists' Flower & Plant Care manual

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

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