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# bells-of-ireland



*Moluccella laevis*  
Bells-of-Ireland, Shellflower, Molucca balm

## vase-life extenders

**REFRIGERATION** Refrigerate bells-of-Ireland at 36 F to 38 F

**WATER** Check water levels daily, and add flower-food solution as needed. Remove any damaged or dying foliage or calyces. Recut stems every two to three days to ensure effective water uptake.

**STORAGE** Store bells-of-Ireland upright to prevent the stems from exhibiting geotro-

## BOTANICAL NAME

*Moluccella laevis* (mo-lu-SEL-la LAY-vis, or mol-you-CHELL-a LAY-a-vis)

## COMMON NAMES

Bells-of-Ireland, Shellflower, Molucca balm

## DESCRIPTION

Bells-of-Ireland are lightly scented flowers that grow 24 to 36 inches tall. They have 1- to 2-inch-long bell-shaped calyces (the outer leaves that appear at the base of most flowers) that cling closely to the upper halves of the stems and are arranged in sev-

eral whorls of six. The plants' true flowers, which are tiny, fragrant and white, are found inside the calyces.

## COLORS

Bells-of-Ireland's showy calyces are available in apple-green and chartreuse.

## VASE LIFE

With proper care, bells-of-Ireland can last from eight to 10 days.

## AVAILABILITY

These flowers are available year-round; peak availability is June through October.

pism (the flowers' natural tendency to curve upward due to the force of gravity).

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Bells-of-Ireland are not sensitive to ethylene gas.

**CONSUMER CARE TIPS** Advise customers to display these flowers in cool locations, out of direct sunlight and away from heat sources. They should put the blossoms in the coldest room of the house at night and mist them for longer enjoyment.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** Despite its common name "bells-of-Ireland," the plant isn't a native of Ireland. Rather, the name refers to the green color of the "bells," or calyces. It hails from the Eastern Mediterranean region to Northwest India, Asia Minor and the Moluccas (Spice Islands), from which the genus name is derived. The species name "laevis" means "smooth," possibly in reference to the true flowers.

**FAMILY** Bells-of-Ireland are members of the Labiatae, or Lamiaceae, (mint) family. Common relatives include *Coleus*, lavender (*Lavandula*), mint (*Mentha*), *Monarda* (bee balm), *Physostegia* (false dragonhead, obedient plant), rosemary (*Rosmarinus*) and *Salvia* (sage).

**CAUTION** The foliage on bells-of-Ireland is prickly and can be irritating to the skin. Remove the leaves to avoid allergic reactions or rashes. The beautiful green bells also will show better. **sfr**

## design tips

**DRYING** To dry bells-of-Ireland, select stems that are fully developed. Air-dry them by hanging them upside down, or stand them upright in a solution of glycerine and water. They do wilt, so give them support for the first day. Dry them in a cool, dark, airy location. Remove the sparse, prickly, textured leaves from the stems so the bells become more conspicuous.

**CREATING GARLANDS** Beautiful garlands can be created easily by trimming out stem sections and threading floret sections together. String with other fresh or dried materials for variety.

**QUICK REPAIR** If a stem tip becomes broken during handling, a wire can be inserted into the hollow stem to repair the damage. Usually, no visible wilting will occur if the stem has not been severed.



*M. laevis*  
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## quality checklist

**BLOOMS** Purchase these blossoms when the tiny florets inside the calyces appear fresh.

**STEMS** Inspect the stems for thickness, sturdiness and any broken tips.

**FOLIAGE** Watch for any signs of bruising, mold or discolored foliage.

Some information provided by:

- The Chain of Life Network® [www.chainoflifeflowernetwork.org](http://www.chainoflifeflowernetwork.org)
- Año Nuevo Flower Growers Inc., Pescadero, Calif.
- Royal Botanical Gardens, [www.kew.org](http://www.kew.org)
- Garden Guides, [www.gardenguides.com](http://www.gardenguides.com)
- Floral Art Mall, [www.floralartmall.com](http://www.floralartmall.com)

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