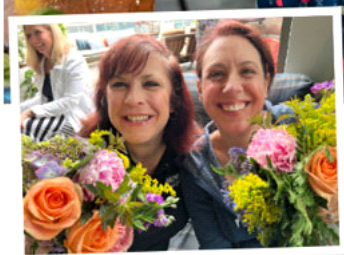


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Show Off Those Cuts

Jennifer Polanz



You know what's really fun? Learning how to make cut flower bouquets. You know how I know? We learned the ins and outs of creating beautiful bouquets during an exclusive event hosted by Bailey in New York City recently (we incorporated their new introduction, Endless Summer Pop Star Hydrangea, into our mixes). My colleague Jen Zurko and I had a blast learning from Mary Eccher of Designs by Mary Eccher. It made me realize this could be a great intro to promoting cut flower varieties for customers to grow. Once you make your own bouquet, you realize it could be as easy as going out to the yard and cutting the components.

Pictured: Mary Eccher of Designs by Mary Eccher teaches us the finer points of cut flower arranging. Inset: Managing editors Jen Zurko and Jen Polanz show off their finished bouquets.

She gave us some great tips that I'll pass along to you to pass along to your customers who I just know will love learning about cut flower options (a total aside—it's not just cuts for bouquets that are in, it's cuts for flower crowns and for drying, too):

- When harvesting cuts, get as far down on the stem as you can and use pruners or something very sharp to cleanly cut the stem.
- Put cuts in slightly warm water (imagine a baby's bath) and do it

immediately. This will keep the flowers turgid.

- If you're going to stick them in floral foam, soak the foam for two days ahead.
- Make sure your vase is clean. Mary recommends a bleach mixture of a quarter cup per gallon of water and soak the vase for 12 minutes to kill any bacteria.
- When building the bouquet, decide on a focal point to build around and position flowers at an angle (when you look at the bottom you should have stems sticking out at a variety of angles—this makes it hard to hold, but worth the end result).
- She recommends using foliage to set off the flower blooms from behind and making sure any "airy" type foliage like solidago doesn't touch each other.

- Mary pairs taller items together to avoid creating the appearance of “bunny ears.”
- Cut all the stems to the same length and drop the stems in the vase together. Cut so the stems touch the bottom of the vase. She cuts straight across the bottom.
- Don't add anything to plain water except cut flower food—no pennies, no Sprite and no aspirin.

Hopefully, this helps you create a small activity that inspires gardeners to create their own cut flower garden. As Mary exclaimed when we did something right, “Huzzah!” **GP**