

Flower Arranging Tips for Conditioning

OASIS: DO NOT hold the oasis under water - this will not make it take up water quicker - it will create air pockets in the oasis. Also do not let water just run over the top of the oasis as this will also create air pockets. Simply place the oasis on top of the water and let it sink/submerge on its own. This will not take more than 3 minutes - 5 if you are not sure. The oasis takes water in from the bottom while forcing air out the top of the oasis. If you completely wet the top of the oasis it will not be able to force the air out. It does not matter if the little holes are up on on the underside in the water.

Cut the oasis to the shape you want while dry then submerge. If you cut it when it is wet you will not be able to use the left over pieces.

If the oasis is above the edge of the container it is helpful to cut off the sharp edges. This will give you more surface and make it easier when creating a more rounded shape.

If you are not planning on having materials drape over the side of the container or go horizontally you do not need to have the oasis above the edge of the container. The more the oasis is above the edge of the container the harder it is to cover.

DO NOT REUSE OASIS. Once it has dried it will not absorb water correctly leaving many air pockets and also will have bacteria.

Try not to reposition flowers once in oasis. This just creates holes in the oasis weakening it and the stem of the flower ends up with compacted oasis in it and will not take up water. If you must reposition be sure to cut the stem before reinserting in the foam.

There are different grades and manufactures of oasis/floral foam. Oasis brand is the best quality. That said there is no need to buy the instant soak as it does not hold up as well and the standard does not take that much longer to soak.

If you are doing a large mass with lots of insertions you might want to cover the foam with chicken wire. This will help hold it together and also brace the stems if the oasis starts to fall apart.

Tips for Mechanics

Securing branches: If placing in oasis try to cut the stem(s) with 2 square sides rather than leaving round. The square edge will not turn as easily.

If you need more stabilization make a diagonal cut on the side at the base of your branch. Then take a left over piece of branch (length to be determined according to size of branch) and make a diagonal cut at both ends. Wire the short piece to the cut at the bottom of branch. This will look a bit like a clothes pin. You should be able to slightly pinch the two pieces together as you insert it in the oasis.

Once in the oasis the stabilizing piece will spread somewhat . Do not add several stabilizing pieces as they will compress the oasis and it will not be able to adequately take in water and will lessen the about of oasis you have for other stems.

If you have a particularly large branch you can stabilize it by first placing a piece of styrofoam (2+ inches) in the bottom of your container then add your branch with some glue on the end. Oasis can be added around the stem or you can place oasis on top of styrofoam and place branch thru both the oasis and styrofoam. Water will not hurt the styrofoam.

If you are using a kenzan it is best to make a cross cut in the bottom of the stem to make it easier to insert.

Coated chicken wire Oasis now makes a coated chicken wire which is very easy to use in place of oasis foam.

Stabalizing flower stems If you have a stem which is now in a too large hole you can cut a small piece of stem or branch and insert it next to the stem. This will help to fill the hole and support the stem.

Glues: Cold glue is stronger than hot glue. Oasis makes a cold floral glue which comes in a tube. Once opened it does not have an indefinite shelf life. To use it you place a dot of glue on the surface of whatever you are gluing. Then you place the material where you want it but rather than pressing it down and holding lift it up (not completely) and down 2 or 3 times before you place permanently. This motion will create "strings" of glue which will help it to hold better.

Oasis also makes U glues which can be removed so placement is not permanent. They are great as long as your materials are completely dry. They will not stick if there is moisture on container or flower. After you have placed them they can be put in water.

If you want to cut them into smaller shapes it is easier if you have teflon coated scissors.

To use place the sticky side down then when you are ready to add your material you remove the white paper (there is a small strip of the white covering which overhangs the glue so you can more easily remove it). DO NOT remove the white paper until you have one side placed or you will end up with what looks like a small ball of gum.

Many oasis products can be found at Michael's and other craft stores. They are also available on line at the Oasis web site.

Conditioning and using flowers

When conditioning flowers if possible cut them underwater. This is especially true for roses.

Do not have foliage in the water in either the vase or the bucket you are using to condition. The foliage speeds up the formation of bacteria.

When conditioning it is not necessary to have the flowers in water up to their necks. I never have the bucket more than half full more like 1/3.

Anthurium if they have been properly hydrated they can be used out of water for at least 3 days. If possible it is good to mist them daily.

Tulips place in a position so they have room to grow and will not change the design or can be removed and recut to desired length. They are phototropic and will grow towards the light.

Fritilaria do not strip the leaves flush with the stem, leave a small nub. If you strip the leaves flush to the stem the stems tend to break at that point. They also will continue to grow.

Lilies it can take several days for the buds to open. Take this into account when you are buying your flowers or you will have lots of green buds but no colorful blooms when you create your design.

Hydrangea take water in thru their "heads" as well as stem. If they are droopy a good soak/submerge in warm water quite often revives them.

Spring bulbs and oasis place several stems and leaves together and then wire them to form one stem which can be carefully inserted in the oasis.

When you are wiring flowers it puts less stress on the stems if the hand you are using to hold the wire is several inches away from the stems. If you hold the wire too close to the stems it will cut into the stems breaking them or shortening the life of the flowers.

PLANT FOOD: If you are using the plant food that sometimes comes with your flowers read the directions carefully - especially the ratio of water to food. Too little will set up an environment which will encourage the rapid growth of bacteria. If you are not sure how much to use just go with clean water and refresh often.