



PACIFIC COAST  
FARMERS' MARKET  
ASSOCIATION

## EVERLASTING FLOWERS



Flowers are one of life's simple pleasures, whether they are received as a bouquet from your significant other, for a birthday or anniversary, or flowers as a gift to yourself. Of course, the freshest flowers can be found at your local farmers' market. While these gorgeous flowers don't keep their beauty forever, there are ways to preserve them and with it your connection to your special memories. Preserving flowers that are in season, like summer roses and fall chrysanthemums, allows us to enjoy them all year round.

The best time to preserve fresh cut flowers is when they're fresh and have their full color and shape. The first step is to decide what you want to do with them – frame them, preserve in a book, or make sachets or potpourri.

There are several ways to dry flowers:

1. Air dry
2. Oven Dry
3. Pressing
4. Glycerin
5. Professionally freeze dry

**Air Dry:** The most common and easiest way to dry flowers is to air dry them. Cut stems to about 6 to 8 inches long and remove excess leaves. And then simply bundle up the flowers with string or rubber band and hang them in a dark room on a hanger in a well-ventilated area. Air drying can take a week to several months depending on the flower you are drying. When dried, spray them with a little hair spray or high-gloss shellac spray to keep them in place because air-dried flowers are brittle, so you will have to handle them

carefully when taking them down. When dry, use in a vase (no watering needed!) or other pretty containers to display them.

**Oven Dry:** Don't want to wait up to six weeks for your flowers to dry? Then oven drying is for you. Spread the blooms evenly on the drying racks. Set oven to 150-200°F, depending on how low your oven can be set. Bake the flowers for 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours. Check your flower tops every half hour and if they are dry to the touch and do not have any moisture left, remove them so they will not burn. Large thicker blooms will take longer to dry and small thin blooms will dry very quickly. For instance, roses and carnations are thick and will take longer to dry than daisies or freesias.

Both oven and air drying are perfect for making sachets or potpourri. Just pull the petals from flowers and place in a porous mesh bag or in a small bowl. Roses, lavender, and other flowers with a distinct scent make great potpourri or sachets.

**Pressing:** This method is best for flowers that are not thick and would lie flat when pressed. Examples of easily-flattened flowers are pansies, daisies, ferns, cosmos, dahlias, verbenas, and zinnias. The old-fashioned way to do this is just to place flowers in a book and weigh it down. Of course, use an old book that you won't mind damaging since the flowers will release moisture. Or sandwich flowers between paper or cardboard first, then press into a book.

Weigh down the book with more books on top. This will take about four to six weeks. Take a peek at your flowers every two weeks to see how they're drying. You'll know they are ready when no moisture remains on the paper they're pressed on.

You can also press flowers with a commercially purchased professional flower press. These are available at any crafts store and are relatively inexpensive.

Pressed flowers are great for picture framing or place between glass for window decoration.

Using glycerin to preserve flowers is expensive, time-consuming, messy, and often the flowers fade over time, while professionally freeze-drying is a complicated and expensive procedure with ingredients hard to come by. This is usually done by companies that specialize in this preservation method.

The freshest and most colorful and fragrant flowers can be found at your local farmers' market where you can feel good about purchasing from a local farmer. Local nurseries that are growing flowers for the farmers' market can get their fresh-cut flowers to you within 48 hours, as opposed to one or two weeks for non-local growers. In addition, these growers create a smaller carbon footprint, delivering to market within 100 miles instead of shipping across the country. Better flowers mean a better outcome when preserving your flowers. Flower preservation is a fun way to keep your memories alive.

TAGS