

The Grapevine

History of Valentine's Flowers

I'm not sure where January went but February has arrived and with it comes the single biggest sales day for floral businesses around the United States. It is estimated that American's will spend \$26 billion dollars this year or approximately \$175 per person on Valentine's Day gifts ranging from chocolate to jewelry and of course flowers. While red roses have historically been the traditional flower to give on Valentine's Day there are other options that might last longer. Let's take a look at the history of the red rose and some of the other floral options out there.

The history of the red rose dates back to the Greek mythology and the goddess Aphrodite. According to mythology the white rose first appeared when Aphrodite was born. When she heard of a plot against her lover Adonis, Aphrodite pricked her feet on the roses thorns rushing to save him and her blood turned the rose red. Because of this history red roses traditionally have the meaning of passion and love. It wasn't till the Victorian era that giving flowers became popular. The color and the type of flower given had different meanings and this allowed secret messages to be sent among admirers. The color of the flowers was especially important and this symbolism holds true today. Red roses symbolize love and passion, yellow roses symbolize friendship, orange roses traditionally symbolize desire and pink roses symbolize gratitude. The number of roses is also important. A dozen roses represent the 12 months of the year and the 12 signs of the zodiac. This number represents perfection and completeness of a relationship.



While a dozen red roses might have been the traditional gift for Valentine's day there are other options available. One of my favorites is the "heart hoyo" or *Hoya kerrii*. This beautiful vining plant has heart shaped leaves that can either be green or variegated. Many times, in the store they are sold as a single "heart" planted in a pot. These "hearts" are often just leaves that have been rooted but don't have a node so they unfortunately will likely just stay as a leaf. Occasionally over a year or more the single leaf plants might sprout but it's unlikely. Many times, the leaves are available at grocery stores, floral shops, greenhouses and other stores. The leaves are easy to care for, simply water when the soil is dry and provide bright indirect light. You can also purchase entire plants that make wonderful houseplants.

One of the most popular houseplants over the last few years has been the string of hearts. These gorgeous plants have small heart shaped leaves that come in various shades of green, silver and variegated white with pink. If left to grow this vining plant can easily reach the floor or trail along a surface. When string of hearts is happy with its environment it also has small white to pink flowers to add to its charm. While the plant is delicate looking in appearance it is fairly tough and easy to care for. Provide bright, indirect light in an east or north window and water when the top couple of inches of soil are dry. String of hearts prefers to stay on the dry side so watch the water and fertilize approximately once a month.



An old-fashioned favorite, the heart leaf philodendron is an inexpensive but beautiful gift. Over the last decade or two several unique cultivars of heart leaf philodendron have been developed including variegated, striped and yellow leaf colors. This houseplant is one of the hardiest plants around and tolerates a wide range of conditions.



If you want to give blooming plant to your valentine a Phalaenopsis or moth orchid can provide months of blooms. These beauties are known for their blooms which can last for up to a month depending on the variety and the flowers come in a variety of different colors. While orchids can get a reputation for being difficult they are relatively easy to care for. Wait to water till the roots turn silvery in color, if they are green the plant is hydrated. Please don't water them using a melting ice cube, rather allow the ice cube to melt over night then pour the room temperature water on the roots. Orchids prefer slightly more humidity than most houses typically have so keeping them in a kitchen or bathroom environment is ideal. Be aware the unusually colored flowers are likely dyed and will bloom white the next bloom cycle.

Reminders-

- During warm spells this winter, be sure to water trees and shrubs in your landscape. Evergreens are especially susceptible to drying out during periods of warm dry winter weather. An easy method of watering is to take a 5-gallon bucket, drill a 1/8" hole in the bottom and place the full bucket near your tree to let the water drip out. After it empties move it to the other side of the tree and fill it again. Be sure to try to water at least 12" into the soil if you are using a sprinkler system. Deeper watering is more important than frequent watering to encourage the new root system to grow. Trees that have been planted in the last three years should be watered once a month in the winter. Don't forget to water your cool season turf grass during dry periods as well.
- If you are using seed collected from your garden or seed you purchased that is more than a couple years old, I would do a germination test with the seeds now before we start planting. To test germination, place several seeds between layers of damp paper towel and place in a plastic bag. Keep the paper towel damp and check the seeds for germination over the next two weeks. Remove seeds as they germinate and at the end of the two weeks calculate how many seeds germinated vs how many didn't.
- Test your soil to get a head start on the planting season.
- If you haven't started your broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts or lettuce seeds (if doing transplants) do so ASAP. It's still too early to start tomato or pepper seeds at this point, wait till March for those plants.

Upcoming Events

- *March 1st at Noon- Houseplants: Basics and Beyond*
Over 66% of U.S. households have at least one houseplant, but often the terms used to describe their care can be confusing. Join Cassie Thiessen, Post Rock District Horticulture Extension Agent, & Calla Edwards, Butler County Horticulture Extension Agent, as they decode common houseplants terms related to light, water, and other plant needs. Learn about some unique houseplants and the best practices to keep them thriving. For more information on the Garden Hour series [click here](#).
- *March 6th at 7 pm- Planning and Problem Solving in the Garden*
Gardening has become an extremely popular activity in the United States. Many of the biggest issues that gardeners have start with not planning the garden out and getting it started correctly at the beginning of the year. Join us to learn the basics of planning the garden from where to plant to when, why rotating plants is important and to cover some basic problem solving for the most common issues that gardeners face. This event will be at 7 pm at the Augusta United Methodist Church at 2420 Ohio Street, Augusta, KS.
- *March 14th at 6 pm- So you want to grow vegetables in containers?*
Are you interested in growing your own vegetables but live in an apartment, have a shady backyard or have a physical limitation that prevents you from gardening in the ground? Container vegetable gardening is a great way to still grow your own vegetables on your window sill, patio, porch or even your front step. Join us at the Bradford Memorial Library to learn how to grow your own tomatoes, corn, herbs and any vegetable in a container.
- *April 5th at Noon- Growing to New Heights with Vertical Gardening*
Make the most of your garden by growing up, instead of out. Create vertical gardens to get your garden off of the ground, provide more space for plants, and expand your gardening area. Join Amanda Groleau, Frontier District Horticulture Extension Agent, as she shares the benefits of vertical gardening. Learn which fruits, vegetables, and flowers will grow best in a vertical garden and how to get started. For more information on the Garden Hour series [click here](#).