

To condition stems for a large floor vase, remove foliage that would sit in water, recut each stem and give the flowers a long drink before arranging them. Use a clean, stable vase with enough fresh water to reach the cut ends, and check the water often.

Prepare the vase and flowers

A floor vase can hold a generous arrangement, but its depth also makes it harder to see what is happening at the bottom. Wash the vase with warm, soapy water, rinse it thoroughly and place it where you want the finished display. Moving a tall vase full of water and flowers can be awkward.

Choose a level spot away from direct sun, heaters and busy walkways. Check that the vase is stable before adding stems. A narrow opening can help support a loose arrangement, while a broad opening may need more stems or an internal support to keep flowers from slipping.

Fill the vase with fresh water and add flower food according to the packet directions, if you have it. You do not need to fill the vase to the brim. The water should cover the ends of every stem, with room left for the water level to rise as you add flowers.

Clean and cut each stem

Remove leaves that would sit below the waterline. Submerged foliage breaks down in water, making it cloudy and encouraging bacteria. Keep the leaves that will show above the rim if they contribute to the shape you want.

Use clean, sharp scissors or pruning shears to trim the base of each stem at an angle. A fresh cut helps the stem take up water. For woody branches, use pruning shears rather than crushing or splitting the ends.

Leave stems longer than you think you need at first. A floor vase changes the way height reads in a room, and you can always trim a little more. Place the cut stems in water promptly rather than leaving them on a table while you work.

Let the stems drink before arranging

Give the prepared flowers time in a clean bucket of fresh water in a cool place before moving them into the vase. This is useful after transport, when stems may have spent time out of water. Keep foliage above the waterline in the bucket too.

Arrange the tallest, strongest stems first, then add shorter flowers and foliage around them. Step back occasionally to see the arrangement at its intended height. There is often beauty in leaving space between stems, especially when the vase itself has a strong shape.

Check the water level daily and top it up so every stem can still drink. Change cloudy water, rinse the vase and recut the stems when practical. Remove fading flowers as they appear.

Questions about tall vase arrangements

How much water does a floor vase need?

Use enough to cover all the cut ends. Check after arranging, since stems may rest at different depths.

Can flowers go straight into the floor vase?

Yes, once the vase is clean and the stems are prepared. A separate drink first can make arranging easier and gives the flowers time to hydrate.

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