

You can use filtered water for a flower arrangement, but clean tap water is usually a good choice too. A clean vase, fresh water and properly trimmed stems matter more than filtering the water in most homes.

When filtered water makes sense

If you already keep a jug of filtered water in the kitchen, it is fine to use it for flowers. Pouring from the jug is no different from filling a drinking glass, provided the jug itself is clean.

Filtered water may be useful if your tap water has a strong smell or contains a lot of visible sediment. Different filters remove different substances, so a filtered label alone does not tell you exactly what is in the water.

There is no need to buy a filter just for a vase. If your tap water is clean and safe to drink, start there and pay attention to how the flowers look over the next few days.

What about softened or distilled water?

Water from a household softener may contain added sodium. If you have access to an unsoftened tap, use that water for your arrangement instead.

Distilled water can also be used, but it is not essential for a typical bouquet. It is often easier to use ordinary tap water and spend your time cleaning the vase and refreshing the stems.

If your water comes from a private well or has an unusual color or odor, its quality can vary. Use water you know is clean, and follow any local advice about your water supply.

Prepare the vase and stems

A cloudy vase on the table is a useful reminder that water and containers need attention. Before arranging fresh flowers, wash away any residue from the last bunch.

1. Wash the vase with soap and water, then rinse it well.
2. Fill it with fresh water. Add flower food if you have it, following the packet directions.
3. Remove leaves that would sit below the waterline.
4. Trim a little from each stem with clean, sharp scissors or a knife.
5. Put the stems in the water promptly and arrange them without crowding the vase.

Keep the water fresh

Check the vase every day. Flowers can drink enough water to leave short stems exposed, especially in a small container. Top up the water as needed.

Change the water every couple of days, or sooner if it looks cloudy. Rinse the vase, trim the stems again and remove any leaves or petals that have fallen into the water. If you add more flower food, follow the packet directions for the amount of water in the vase.

Find a good spot for the arrangement

Even clean water cannot make up for a poor location. Keep the vase away from direct sun, radiators and other sources of heat. A cooler spot can help cut flowers last longer.

Move the arrangement away from a crowded fruit bowl too. Ripening fruit releases ethylene, a gas that can cause some flowers to age faster.

Use filtered water if it is convenient, but do not worry if it is not. Fresh water and a clean vase are a sound place to start.

Next step: grave care from a distance