

Some gifted flowers, including roses, carnations, chrysanthemums and hydrangeas, may grow roots from stem cuttings. It is harder to succeed with bouquet stems than with fresh garden growth, but a healthy piece with leaves and nodes is worth trying.

Pick flowers with usable stems

Roses are a common option. Choose a firm, green stem with several sound leaves and nodes, the places where leaves meet the stem. Snip off the flower before you try to root the cutting, so the stem can put its effort into producing roots.

Carnations and chrysanthemums may also grow from stem pieces. If the bouquet includes side shoots without flowers, those can be useful choices. Hydrangeas can sometimes root as well, but a fresh shoot is more promising than a bouquet stem that has spent several days in a vase.

Some flowers cannot be propagated this way. Tulips, daffodils and other bulb flowers grow from bulbs rather than from cut stems. A tulip stem in a vase will not produce a replacement bulb.

Inspect the flowers before you begin

Start promptly, while the stems are still in good shape. Look for firm, green growth without slimy areas or decay. Do not use stems that have dried out entirely or stayed for a long time in murky vase water.

Each cutting needs at least one node that can be placed in the rooting mix. A plain section of stem with no visible nodes is unlikely to work. Put any stems you plan to use in clean water while you prepare the equipment and mix.

Make and pot each cutting

Gather clean, sharp scissors or pruning shears, a small container with drainage holes and a moist mix that drains freely. Clean cutting tools lower the risk of bringing rot into the plant material.

1. Cut a healthy stem into a section about 10 to 15 centimetres long. Make the bottom cut just beneath a node.
2. Take off the flower and the leaves on the lower part of the stem. Keep a few leaves at the top, making sure they do not touch the mix.
3. Push the lower node into the damp mix, then press the mix gently around the stem.
4. Set the pot somewhere bright but out of direct light. To hold in moisture, you can place a clear plastic bag above the leaves.
5. Keep the mix slightly moist rather than soaked. Look in on the cutting often, and discard it if it turns soft or develops mould.

Wait for a solid root system

Root growth may take several weeks or more. Fresh leaves are not proof that roots have formed: a cutting can draw on stored energy to make new growth. After a few weeks, tug very gently to check for resistance. Do not pull firmly, since young roots are easy to harm.

When roots have developed well, transfer the cutting to a pot filled with regular potting mix. If it has been covered with a bag, get it used to ordinary room conditions a little at a time. Some pieces will fail, so starting with several suitable stems gives you a better chance.

Questions people often ask

Can bouquet stems root in water?

Some may make roots in clean water, while others are likely to rot. Moist rooting mix is another useful method, particularly for rose cuttings.

Is rooting hormone necessary?

No. Cuttings can root without hormone, although a product made for plant cuttings may help. Use it according to the directions on its label.

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