

Bouquet Preservation...What to Consider?

Man has been involved in some form of floral preservation since the beginning of time. We associate many important life events with flowers; weddings, births, and anniversaries, just to name a few and it is natural to want to save the flowers from these special events.

Air drying and floral pressing are age-old arts dating back to before Egyptian times. Silica gel drying came into vogue in the late 1700's. Ancient Indians in the high Andes Mountains practiced a form of freeze-drying. William Hyde Wallaston introduced the first modern freeze-drying method in 1813 to the Royal Society in London. The freeze dry method used today was perfected during World War II as a method to assist the storage of human plasma. Freeze drying is now employed quite extensively by pharmaceutical manufactures, and food producers. About 15 years ago the first flowers were successfully freeze-dried and over the years floral freeze-drying has become a combination of art and science.

Proper floral freeze-drying doesn't produce flowers that are brittle and lifeless as traditional drying methods do. There are very few experts in this industry because the equipment is expensive, requires extensive training to operate, and knowledge about flowers and floral design is imperative. Flowers stay in the freeze dry equipment for about two weeks and the complete process can take up to 12 weeks.

There are a few things you should know prior to selecting a company to preserve your flowers:

- Do they pretreat and rehydrate the flowers before they freeze-dry them? This process helps retain the colour of your flowers and opens the cells so they freeze dry with a natural look.
- Are all bouquets photographed and then dis-assembled for freeze-drying? This is the only way each flower will retain its colour and shape.
- Are the flowers post-treated after freeze-drying? This process coats each flowers with a thin, transparent layer that protects them from light and humidity.

Not all freeze-drying companies complete each step because of the time and labour required. Without these steps; however, your flowers may not retain their natural look or will have a shorter lifespan.

Preserved flowers are attractive accents for any home and appear much more natural than silk arrangements. There are hundreds of frames, glass or acrylic domes, and beautifully creative custom wall and tabletop designs available to display your flowers.

Consult a floral preservationist at least two months prior to your wedding so you can arrange to have your flowers shipped or delivered while they are still fresh. Thousands of brides are now preserving their bouquets and wedding flowers; with so few experts in this industry, reservations must be made months in advance so you will not be disappointed.

Enjoy the sentimental memories for years to come- make this extraordinary display a key centrepiece in your new homes décor or a gift to someone special. Just as you preserve your wedding gown, photographs and other sentimental wedding memorabilia, you can now preserve your bridal flowers for a lifetime of enjoyment.

Floral preservation is available from Heller & Reid anywhere in the United States. A refrigerated floral preservation shipper will be sent at no additional charge and allows flowers and bouquets to be sent overnight express mail, FedEx, or UPS to our design centre in Richardson, Texas. For

more information on freeze drying and floral preservation and preservation of bridal bouquets
please visit www.hellerand Reid.com or call toll free 800-742-9570