**April Flower of the Month: Daisy**

The Flower of the Month for April is the daisy—or, more specifically, the gerbera daisy.

Gerberas are one of the most popular flowers today. Their stylish visage is often seen in fashion and home décor. Also known as the Transvaal daisy, African daisy, veldt daisy and Barberton daisy, the flowers grow naturally in South Africa. Their common names refer to the parts of the country in which the flowers were first discovered. Transvaal, for example, is the former name of a northeastern province of South Africa. Barberton is a city in that area. And veldt refers to the grassy plateaus that are found throughout the region.

The genus *Gerbera* is named after an 18th-century German medical doctor and naturalist, Traugott Gerber. This man served as director of a botanical garden in Moscow, while also teaching medicine and growing a medicinal garden on which he relied for teaching his students about herbology.

One reason for the popularity of the April Flower of the Month is its long vase life—up to 14 days (and even 18 days for certain varieties). But the range of colors in which you can find them also make them especially appealing. Nearly all hues are available except for blues. Bicolors—which include two colors on the same blossom—are common, also. Centers of the flowers vary with striking contrasts of yellow, dark red or red-violet, green, black and brown.

**Five Standard Types of Gerberas and Three Sizes**

Gerberas are available in five standard types, along with specialty hybrids with even more unique looks.

* **Singles.** These flowers usually have a green center with one row of petals that do not overlap.
* **Doubles.** The center of these flowers is usually green or a darker color. April’s Flower of the Month in this form has two rows of overlapping petals.
* **Crested doubles.** Similar to doubles, these flowers’ centers are green or dark with two overlapping rows of petals. The difference is that they also have one or more inner rows of shorter petals.
* **Full crested doubles.** These flowers produce a solid row of overlapping petals. Their inner rows of petals are so abundant that they cover the center.
* **Quilled crested doubles.** This type is also called a spider gerbera. They feature spike-shaped petals that overlap with a green or dark center and one or more inner rows of short petals.

Among the specialty gerbera hybrids, you’ll find cushion types with multiple overlapping rows with hundreds of petals. Others offer feathery looks.

The differences in April’s Flower of the Month’s sizes range from miniatures (only 2 to 3 inches in diameter), to standard sized (3 to 5 inches) and giant blossoms (5 to 6 inches).

**Gerbera Daisy Vase Care**

Gerberas’ long vase life can be diminished if you don’t care for them properly. Because these flowers are especially susceptible to bacteria in vase water clogging their stems, you need to give them daily care. Steps to follow are:

1. Remove the stems from the vase every day. Dump the vase water, wash the vase with warm, sudsy water and then rinse thoroughly.
2. Fill the vase with fresh water and the appropriate amount of flower food.
3. Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut at least one-half inch from each stem at an angle.
4. Make sure to display your Flower of the Month bouquet in a cool location. Keep it out of direct sunlight and out of the draft from heating and air-conditioning vents.

**Gerbera Fun Facts**

Gerberas respond to the force of gravity (referred to by florists and other flower experts as geotropism). This means the flowers often have curved stems. This is why you’ll often see gerberas with wire wrapped around their stems or encased in plastic straws. Both techniques don’t add to the flowers’ vase life, but they do help to keep the flower heads upright.

The flowers are also phototropic—meaning they will naturally turn their heads toward the light, whether sunlight or artificial.