**January Flower of the Month: Carnation**

Some people consider carnations to be the boring—but those people obviously haven’t seen the huge variety of carnation types and colors available today. Perhaps our Flower of the Month for January has developed its reputation as a common flower because it tends to be so affordable and long-lasting (up to 14 days or longer). But that gives you all the more reason to love it because you can buy lots of the blossoms to create some major impact when using them for decorating.

**Carnation Types and Colors**

Carnations—also known in the floral trade as dianthus—come in two types:

* **Standard.** Standard carnations have single, large heads, usually about 3 inches in diameter. Growers create these by disbudding—that is, they remove the smaller buds that grow on the stems so that all of the plant’s energy goes into creating one primary blossom.
* **Spray.** Spray carnations are smaller versions of their standard cousins. They feature branched stems with multiple blossoms of about 1 inch in diameter.

You’ll find our Flower of the Month available in a wide range of colors—nearly any hue except blue. Bicolored varieties feature two colors. For example, the main color may be pale pink but the outside, ruffly edge of the flower is a darker hot pink.

**Designing a Massed Carnation Bouquet**

Massing these frilly flowers together creates the look of one giant flower, make them popular for centerpieces or contemporary bridal bouquets. These design technique also makes it very easy for you to create your own designs if you want to indulge your crafty side.

Thus, while we love to create floral designs for you using carnations and any other flowers of your choice, we’re happy to help you pick out and buy loose stems (that’s florist-speak for flowers taken directly from our floral cooler, wrapped in tissue and sent with you outside of a vase). Here are four easy steps to creating your own design using our Flower of the Month:

1. Once you get them home, you’ll need to prepare your container. Choose one that has a large enough opening to be able to hold at least a handful of blossoms. Make sure the vase is clean and then fill it with fresh water and the appropriate amount of flower food from the packet we gave you when you bought your flowers.
2. To begin creating your design, choose one stem and hold it just below the head between your forefinger or middle finger and thumb. Begin adding stems individually, adding each in a circular fashion around that original stem. Place each one slightly below the one above it to begin creating a mounded shape. The stems may begin to form a sort of teepee shape, which will help keep them in place when you place them inside your vase.
3. Once you have the size you desire, hold the bouquet of this Flower of the Month up next to your container. Place it so that the flowers will be just above the rim of the vase. Note that height and then trim the stems off to that length.
4. Remove any foliage that may fall below the water line and place the arrangement into your vase.

**Vase Care for Carnations**

Caring for your carnations—also known in the floral trade as dianthus—is similar to other flowers. The main variance is that carnations are more prone to ethylene exposure than other blossoms. Ethylene is the safe, yet odorless, gas emitted by ripening produce. So keep your flowers away from fruits and veggies.

To ensure the longest vase life for your flowers, follow these steps:

1) Keep your arrangement of January’s Flower of the Month out of direct sunlight. Also, place it away from heat or cold drafts.

**2)** Ever two to three days, remove the flowers from the vase. Trim about ½ inch off the bottoms of each stem. **Strip off any** excess foliage on the stems that will fall below the water level.

3) Pour out the water and wash the vase with warm, sudsy water. Rinse well. Fill with new water add the appropriate amount of flower food from the packet that arrived with your arrangement.

4) Repeat these steps as noted or sooner if the water begins to turn cloudy or change colors (an indication that bacteria is growing in the water, which will impede the stems’ ability to uptake water and causing flowers to wilt).

5) Remove dead or drooping leaves and blossoms regularly to keep your arrangement looking fresh.

**Carnation Fun Fact**

Among the many varieties of carnations grown (about 90 percent of which come from Colombia), you may notice the sweet aroma of cloves. This feature of our Flower of the Month is a main reason the perfume industry in France grows acres of the flower to create the base essence for many fragrances.