**August Flower of the Month: Gladiolus**

The Flower of the Month for August—gladiolus—derives its name from its sword-shaped leaves. *Gladius* means sword in Latin. In folk lore, the flower symbolizes strength and moral integrity. Others attribute the blooms with representing infatuation. Keep this in mind if you send someone bouquet of these beauties. Many say you’ll be telling your recipient that your heart is “pierced” with passion for that person.

A perfect bloom for lovers’ celebrating August birthdays, the flower also is the 40th wedding anniversary flower.

**Towering Stalks of Variety and Color**

Gladioli—the plural form of the word—grow in several sizes. The traditional stalks of flowers have large, funnel-shaped, ruffly-edged blooms. Typically, 10 to 16 flowers grow up stems ranging from 3 to 4 feet in length and mostly on one side.

A miniature version of the August Flower of the Month has a stem of only 24 inches and only seven blossoms. This cultivar of the flower tends to be blotchy—but still quite beautiful—in coloring.

The flower follows the hues of the rainbow in its availability, except for blue. Otherwise, you can find the blossoms in yellows, oranges, reds, violets and greens, along with bicolor options.

**Unusual Facts About Gladiolus**

Glads—as florists often refer to the flowers—are one of a handful of flowers that are known as geotropic. That means that if the flowers are placed into an arrangement horizontally or at an angle, the tips will begin to curve upward. Often florists will do this for effect to add interest to a design.

Another odd fact about the flower: While on most plants, removing faded blossoms is encouraged to help buds open, scientific research has proven the opposite to be true with gladioli. Removing lower blossoms from August’s Flower of the Month actually reduces the ability for buds on the upper half of the stem to fully mature and open.

On the flip side, some think that removing immature buds at the tips of the spikes may help lower buds to open. While doing so won’t negatively impact the stems, it also has no positive effect.

**Vase Care of Glads**

Gladioli have long vase life, as long as 10 days depending on the maturity of the blossoms and how well you care for them. To squeeze every day possible out of the life of your flowers, follow these steps:

1. Remove the stems from the vase every two to three days. If water becomes cloudy or has a strong odor, change the water more often. Both are indicators of bacteria growing in the water, which will impede the stems from taking in liquid.
2. Dump the vase water, wash the vase with warm, sudsy water and then rinse thoroughly.
3. Fill the vase with fresh water and the appropriate amount of flower food.
4. Remove any damaged or dying foliage from your Flower of the Month but leave faded blooms. Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut at least one-half inch from each stem at an angle.
5. Keep your bouquet in a cool location out of direct sunlight and drafts from heating and air-conditioning vents.
6. Check the water level daily. Glads drink a lot, so add more as needed. Make sure to correctly mix the appropriate quantity of flower food with the water when adding it to the vase.

If your city adds fluoride to your tap water, avoid using that for your gladioli. The plants are sensitive to this chemical, and it will cause petal edges to deteriorate and blossoms to fail to open. Instead, substitute bottled or distilled water to ensure the longest vase life.

**Fun Fact About Gladiolus**

Also known as a sword lily or corn flag, some individuals mistakenly refer to the singular form of the Flower of the Month for August as gladiola. Doing so can lead one to think that the plural is gladiolas—which sounds very similar to gladiolus, the true verbiage for a single stem. But neither gladiola nor gladiolas is correct. Gladiolus is always the singular form, while gladioli is the term for multiple stems.