**May Flower of the Month: Lily of the Valley**

The Flower of the Month for May is the lily of the valley. This flower became especially popular in recent years after being included in the [bridal bouquet of Kate Middleton](http://www.floristchronicles.com/2011/duplicate-a-royal-bridal-bouquet) when she married Prince William in Great Britain. Since then, many brides have wanted to include the blossom in their bouquets, though the flower has been common in royal weddings for centuries.

In fact, the bell-shaped flowers—which grow in clusters and are available not only in white but in pink—grow wild in England and are abundant in many areas. Growers there first cultivated the plant as far back as 1420. Legend says that the flowers grew where Mary’s tears fell at the base of the cross when Christ was crucified.

The fragrance of the delicate blossoms of the May Flower of the Month is another reason many love them. While many flowers’ perfume has disappeared as growers work on developing varieties with longer vase lives, the lily of the valley continues to offer a sweet aroma that many cherish.

**Fun Facts About Lily of the Valley (and One Caution)**

The plant’s botanical name is c*onvallaria majalis*. The term *majalis* refers to May, when the plants commonly come into bloom. Its genus name, *convallaria*, is Latin for valley.

As you would guess, lily of the valley is a member of the Liliaceae family, and common relatives include lilies, fritallarias, tulips, muscaris, eremuruses and ornighogalums. Being a part of the lily family means that the berries of this flower can be toxic. So take care to keep this Flower of the Month away from anyone, such as toddlers and pets, who might be tempted by them.

**Lily of the Valley Availability**

While this flower is available year-round, you can find them most easily from October through May. That means that brides who are getting married at other times of the year but want this flower in their bouquet need to let us know early so that we can order the blooms in advance. They can be more expensive in the off season, but for the bride with her heart set on including this romantic flower in her wedding, the price is well worth it.

**Purchasing Tip for Lilies**

When buying lily of the valley, look forstems with three to four open flower bells near the base. Choose those with puffy buds just showing color. You’ll get the longest vase life out of the younger blossoms of this Flower of the Month. Check their fragrance, too. The fresher they are, the more fragrant they will smell.

**Lily of the Valley Vase Care**

Lily of the valley has a shorter vase life compared to many flowers—only three to six days. Thus, you should take special care with them to get the longest vase life possible.

Because these flowers are susceptible to ethylene—a colorless, odorless gas that is harmless to humans but devastating to many flowers—keep them away from fruits and vegetables, which emit the gas as they mature.

Daily care of the flowers include the following steps:

1. Remove the stems from the vase every two to three days. Take care in handling the flowers because the tips of the blossoms damage easily.
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 or flowers from your Flower of the Month bouquet. Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut at least one-half inch from each stem at an angle.
5. Make sure to display your lily of the valley arrangement in a cool location. Keep it out of direct sunlight and out of the draft from heating and air-conditioning vents.
6. Check the water level daily and add more—mixed with flower food, as indicated on the packet directions—as needed between vase cleanings.