

## PRESERVING FLOWERS FROM YOUR GARDEN

These long hot days of summer are a wonderful time to enjoy the flower garden's bounty. Those of us who are slaves to our gardens, spending endless hours digging, weeding, fertilizing and debugging, can now, finally reap our rewards. Now is also the time to preserve those beautiful hard-earned blooms for year round use. There are several methods of preserving flowers. Air drying is by far the simplest :All flowers should be harvested when dry to the touch but not wilted), ideally in late morning on a sunny day, after any dew has dried off the plants. Some varieties are better cut at the bud stage but most do best when the flower is nearly fully open. The harvested flower stems should then be tied with a rubber band or raffia and hung upside down in a cool, dry, place out of the sun until fully dried.

When planting your garden, choosing plants that have blooms which are easy to preserve makes it possible to enjoy them year round. Here at the Cedar Rose, we sell several varieties of potted perennials and flowering shrubs which have flowers that are excellent for preserving: Hydrangeas such as Annabelle, Peegee and Pink Diamond all grow large, beautiful heads of showy delicate blooms that can be dried right on the bush. Simply cut these just as they begin to turn dry and papery and hang upside down in bunches. Similarly, Baby's Breath can be harvested when it has partially dried on the plant Silverking Artemesia has silvery foliage which dries beautifully and maintains its lovely scent for years. We air dry great bunches of it here and use it to make wreaths and topiaries. It should be harvested when the rather inconspicuous grey flowers are just fully open and tied into bunches. Lavender should be harvested just before the flower heads are open. Yarrow, Liatris, and of course, Roses should all be harvested when the flowers are open-just before their peak. Besides air drying, other popular methods for preserving flowers are drying in silica sand , pressing in a flower press and freeze drying (which requires expensive commercial equipment.) Some flowers are better suited to certain methods of preserving than others. You can experiment to find what works best or check out some of the excellent books available on the subject. Silica drying kits, and floral sprays that help keep dried flowers intact and clean are available here at The Cedar Rose. If you bring in your own dried flowers we can also create wreaths, swags or arrangements for you.

Appointments can also be set up to help you to create your own. As you can see, it is indeed possible to surround yourself with flowers year round without spending a fortune at the florist.

*... Annette, August 2002*