

Imported flowers pass through several stages before they are ready for a florist to sell. Farms, transport crews, import inspectors and distributors all help protect them from heat, physical damage and delays.

Harvesting and packing for travel

The process starts on a flower farm. Workers cut stems at a stage chosen for the kind of flower and the length of its trip. Some flowers are picked with buds partly closed, giving them time to open after they arrive. The best harvest stage depends on the flower: roses and fully open sunflowers, for example, are not prepared for travel in exactly the same way.

After harvest, workers sort stems by features such as length and appearance. They may take off some leaves, group the stems into bunches, then place them in water or a treatment solution. Packing keeps the flowers from shifting around or being bruised. Depending on the flower and route, the boxes may contain dry stems or containers of water.

Many cut flowers are chilled soon after they are picked. Cooler conditions can slow ageing and limit water loss. However, flowers do not all tolerate the same temperatures. Certain tropical varieties can be harmed by excessive cold, so they need different handling.

Transport, checks and border rules

The route may involve air, road or sea travel. The choice depends on distance, timing and the shipment. Flowers can pass from a farm to a packing site, then to an airport or port and through a distribution centre. Care is needed at every handover. Even a brief period in excessive heat can reduce the life of some flowers.

1. Workers harvest, sort and pack the flowers for transport.
2. The shipment travels under temperature conditions chosen for its flowers and route.
3. Officials review paperwork and may check the flowers for pests or disease.
4. A distributor or wholesaler receives the shipment and forwards it to florists.

Import requirements vary according to the country and the type of plant. A shipment may need a certificate showing that it meets plant health rules. If an inspection finds a concern, the flowers may be held up, treated, turned away or destroyed. The response depends on the problem and the applicable rules.

Preparing flowers for sale

At a wholesaler or florist, staff may open the packages, trim the stems and stand them in clean water. This lets flowers that travelled dry begin taking up water again. Staff may also remove damaged leaves or petals and sort the stems before offering them for sale.

The florist stores and prepares the flowers for arrangements. Their condition at that point is shaped by the whole journey, not just the flight or drive. Harvest timing, packing, temperature and care after arrival all affect what you see in a bouquet.

Ask your florist for care advice suited to the stems you bring home. For many cut flowers, useful first steps include making a fresh cut, using clean water and choosing a place away from heat.

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