

After a puja, you can respectfully return flowers to the earth by composting them or placing them in a garden, if that fits your family's practice. Remove anything that will not break down naturally, and ask your temple or an elder for guidance if you are unsure about a particular offering.

Start with your family's custom

Flowers offered during a puja are often treated with care because of their part in worship. Customs differ among families, temples and communities, so there is no single method everyone follows. Some people place the flowers at the base of a plant, while others set them aside for composting or follow a temple's instructions.

If you are visiting a temple, ask a member of the temple staff where offerings should go. There may be a designated collection point. At home, you can ask a family member how the flowers are usually handled, especially if the puja marks an important occasion.

You do not need an elaborate ritual to clear away the flowers. Take a moment to gather them carefully, rather than sweeping them up with unrelated rubbish. If it feels right to you, you can offer a quiet word of thanks as you do this.

Prepare the flowers for compost or soil

Separate the flowers from plastic wrapping, ribbon, foil, pins and other decorations. Put those materials in the appropriate waste or recycling collection. Check garlands closely, since they may contain synthetic thread or wire that should not go into compost or soil.

If you have a compost bin, add the petals and other plant material to it. Mixing them with dry leaves or other suitable garden material can help keep the pile from becoming too wet. A small amount of wilted flowers can also be placed around a garden plant, or buried in soil where you have permission to do so.

Remove large or hard stems if they will not break down easily in your compost setup. If the flowers have been heavily dyed or sprayed with a substance you cannot identify, follow local compost guidance rather than assuming they belong in the bin.

Choose a safe place for the offering

Although placing offerings in flowing water is a practice in some traditions, flowers and the materials attached to them can add to pollution in rivers and lakes. A garden, compost collection or temple offering collection can be a more practical choice. Check local rules before leaving anything on public land or near a waterway.

If you have no garden or compost service, ask your temple if it accepts used flowers. You can also wrap the flowers in paper and place them in your household waste if no other suitable option is available. Keep them separate from items you regard as sacred, and follow your family's guidance for those items.

A simple, thoughtful approach is enough: handle the flowers with care, choose a suitable place for them, and let your own tradition guide the details.

Also helpful: cut flower vase life