

To keep Mother's Day peonies fresh longer, put them in a clean vase with fresh water, trim their stems and keep them somewhere cool. Change the water regularly and remove fading flowers so the rest of the bouquet stays clean.

Prepare the vase and stems

Start with a vase washed in warm, soapy water and rinsed well. A clean vase gives the flowers a better start than one with residue from an earlier arrangement. Fill it with fresh, cool water and add flower food if a packet came with the bouquet. Follow the packet directions for the amount of water.

Before arranging the peonies, remove any leaves that would sit below the waterline. Leaves left underwater can decay and make the water cloudy. Leave the upper foliage in place if you like its shape around the flowers.

Use clean, sharp scissors or pruning shears to cut a little off the bottom of each stem. Cut at an angle, then put the stems in water promptly. If the bouquet is wrapped tightly, remove the wrapping so the blooms have room to open.

Give each flower a little space rather than pressing the stems into a narrow vase. Peonies can open into large, heavy blooms, so choose a vase sturdy enough to support them without tipping.

Choose a cool spot and refresh the water

Keep the vase out of direct sun and away from radiators, heaters and other warm spots. Heat encourages flowers to open and fade more quickly. A cool room is a good choice, especially overnight.

It also helps to keep the bouquet away from a fruit bowl. Ripening fruit releases ethylene gas, which can speed up the aging of some cut flowers.

Check the vase each day. These small jobs make the water easier to keep clean and let you spot a flower that is starting to fade.

- Top up the water if the level has dropped.
- Replace the water every couple of days, or sooner if it looks cloudy.
- Rinse the vase and trim the stems again when you change the water.
- Remove loose petals and any flowers that have finished.

Handle the petals gently while you work. Moving the arrangement by its vase, rather than pulling on the stems, helps protect the blooms.

Questions about peony care

Can tight peony buds still open?

Many buds will open in a vase, although very tight buds may not. Give them fresh water and a little time in a room away from direct sun. Avoid forcing the petals apart, since they can tear.

Should peonies go in the refrigerator?

A cool place can slow their opening, but a household refrigerator may contain fruit that releases ethylene. A cool room away from sunlight is a simpler choice for an arranged bouquet.

What if a peony starts to droop?

Check the water level, trim the stem with clean scissors and return it to fresh water. A drooping flower may recover, though an older bloom may simply be nearing the end of its vase life.

Worth a look: original source