



Long-lasting Bouquets Bring the Outdoors in

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When the weather is just a little too hot to enjoy being out in the garden, it's the perfect time to bring the garden inside. Many of the same plants that make for a beautiful landscape outdoors can have the same—or even more dramatic—impact inside.

Trying out different landscape designs takes some time and effort. Not so with cut arrangements; and the possibilities for flowers, foliage, colors, combinations, and containers are endless. It offers a chance to pay more attention to texture and detail and may offer some direction about what plants to combine in the landscape outdoors too.



Annuals offer an abundance of quick, bright options for bouquets but here the focus is on perennials or other plants that come back year after year, summer after summer.

For filler and to hold up more delicate flowers, hosta leaves are wonderful. They have a long "vase-life" and come in a variety of greens, from gray/blue to chartreuse to variegated. The foliage from coral bells, brunnera and lady's mantle are other good backdrops for more colorful partners. Even apartment-dwellers usually have access to hosta leaves, a blossom and seedheads from grasses.

Grasses offer extremely long-lasting seedheads and blades of foliage to complement any arrangement. As a contrast to the vertical lines of grasses, add the fluid curves of grape vine, clematis, bittersweet or Virginia creeper.

The arched stems of Solomon's seal are perfect for vases. In spring, blossoms hang delicately from the stem, and mid-summer purple berries are pendulous from the stem in the same soft arc.

For perennials, simply head out in the yard with a scissors. For truly long-lasting arrangements, though, consider the following: allium, aster, astilbe, baby's breath, balloon flower, bee balm, bellflower, black-eyed Susan, blazing star, coneflower, coreopsis, daisy, goldenrod, lavender, lily, penstemon, phlox, salvia, sedum, sunflower, toad lily, turtlehead and yarrow.

You can do your own experimenting with woody cuts. The foliage from some trees and shrubs wilts immediately upon cutting, but viburnum, forsythia, lilac, fruit trees and quince—preferably with lime green apple-like fruit visible—offer wonderful options for bouquets (more at www.nfs.unl.edu/SpecialtyForest/woodyflorals.asp). Woody florals with interesting branching or foliage include willow, dogwood, redbud, deutzia, camellia, witch hazel, hibiscus and hydrangea. **To dry hydrangea blossoms, simply wait until the blossoms have begun to fade and dry out on branches in early September or later fall. Then cut the blossoms, remove foliage, and put them upright in a container with NO water. The colors soften to muted greens, blues and pinks, and they last for years.*