



gardenia



Gardenia jasminoides
Cape jasmine, Cape jessamine
Photo: Kitayama Brothers

BOTANICAL NAME

Gardenia jasminoides
(gar-DEEN-yuh or gar-DEE-nee-uh,
jaz-min-OY-deez)

COMMON NAMES

Cape jasmine, Cape jessamine

DESCRIPTION

Gardenias are intensely fragrant waxy-petaled blooms that resemble *Camellias*. Flowers can open to as large as 3 inches in diameter.

COLOR

Wedding favorites, these blooms are available only in white.

VASE LIFE

Gardenia blooms do not take up water after they are cut; therefore, they last only one to three days under most circumstances, depending on use.

AVAILABILITY

Gardenias are available year-round from domestic growers. Their flowering cycle is dependent on light and temperature, so it can take these flowers 30 or more days longer to bloom during the winter months; therefore, supply can be limited from December through March.

care and handling

AIR TIGHT, COLD AND MOIST Because *Gardenia* blooms do not take up water after they're cut from the plants, hydration and flower-food solutions aren't necessary. Instead, spray these blooms with a flower antitranspirant; seal them in their shipping boxes or airtight bags; and store them in a floral cooler at 34 F to 36 F, with high humidity (90 percent to 95 percent), until you're ready to use them.

COVER THEIR FACES To prevent them from turning yellow and getting bruised, cover these blooms with damp cotton or facial tissue before sealing their shipping boxes or placing them into airtight bags.

HANDLE DELICATELY *Gardenias* will start to turn creamy yellow when left at room temperature and/or exposed to air. These delicate flowers also bruise easily when touched (a reaction to the acids and oils on people's fingers). Follow these tips when working with *Gardenias*.

- Keep blooms covered with damp cotton or facial tissue.
- If you prefer not to keep these flowers covered, spray them again with an anti-transpirant or a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part lemon juice. Also, keep your hands wet, touching the blooms as little as possible.
- Once a design is complete, keep the

Gardenias covered, sealed and refrigerated until the design is used.

- When preparing to use *Gardenias*, break down the sides of the boxes, so you can remove the flowers more easily.

MAKEUP, PLEASE You can lightly touch up bruises or blemishes on *Gardenias* with white or ivory floral spray paint on a cotton swab, typing correction fluid or even baby powder.

gardenias on stems

Stemmed *Gardenias* are a relatively new offering. **Kitayama Brothers**, in Watsonville, Calif., reports that the single-bloom stems are harvested in bud stage and will stay that way as long as they are refrigerated. When the stems hit room temperature, the buds will open within one day. *Gardenia* blooms on stems are smaller than premium-grade cut *Gardenias*, and stem lengths average eight to 10 inches. Care and handling is the same as for other cut flowers: recut stems, place stems into hydration and flower-food solutions, and refrigerate.



G. jasminoides
Stemmed *Gardenia*
Photo: Kitayama Brothers

purchasing tips

■ Buy cut *Gardenias* when the outer petals are open and the center petals are closed. Blooms should be bright white, with no browning, blemishes or wrinkles. If protective wax has been applied, ensure that it is not peeling away from the petals.

■ *Gardenia* blooms are sold in various grades, or qualities, and are packaged and priced accordingly.

- "No. 1 Grade," "Premium," "Perfect" or "First-Quality" blossoms are the largest, whitest and least blemished. The center petals are often sealed with wax and have either fresh leaf or plastic leaf support collars. These top-grade *Gardenias* are sealed in boxes, usually with three blossoms per box.

- "No. 2 Grade," "Seconds" or "Semi *Gardenias*" (also known as "work *Gardenias*" by some growers) are smaller, might be more open and may have small blemishes or uneven petals. These flowers also are often waxed, may have plastic collars and are typically sold in boxes of 12, 24 or 25.

- "No. 3 grade" *Gardenias*, sometimes called "funeral *Gardenias*," "cocktail *Gardenias*" or "work *Gardenias*," are generally the smallest, most open, most blemished and most irregularly shaped blossoms. When available, they are generally sold without any protective wax or support collars and in boxes of 50 or 100. **sfr**