

# cut flower stock

*Matthiola incana*  
Spray stock  
Photo: Ball SB



*Matthiola incana*  
Stock

## **BOTANICAL NAME**

*Matthiola incana*  
(muh-THY-oh-luh or mah-tee-OH-luh and in-CON-uh or in-KAY-nuh)

## **COMMON NAMES**

Stock, Gillyflower

## **DESCRIPTION**

Stocks are “spike” flowers, with dense columnar clusters, 3 to 8 inches long, of fragrant round florets at stem ends. Most cut-flower varieties are double flowered, and the blooms have a strong spicy clovelike fragrance.

Spray stocks are relatively new to the cut-flower market, and they have multiple smaller lateral bloom spikes that branch from the main stems.

Leaves are soft, gray-green, oblong and up to 4 inches long, and stem lengths typically range from 12 to 28 inches.

## **COLORS**

Stocks are available in purple, lavender, blue-violet, fuchsia, magenta, pink, rose, mauve, apricot, peach, salmon, yellow, cream and white.

## **VASE LIFE**

When properly processed and cared for, stocks can last from about three to eight days at the consumer level, depending on their maturity at the time of sale.

## **AVAILABILITY**

Stocks are available year-round.

## care and handling

**IMMEDIATE ATTENTION** Unpack stocks immediately upon their arrival, and check the flower quality. Remove all stem bindings and any foliage from the stems that would be under water in storage containers. Rinse stems under running water, especially those of field-grown flowers, to remove microbes, dirt and debris.

**STEM CUTTING** Recut the stems on an angle with a sharp blade, removing at least 1 inch of stem. If stem ends are semiwoody, whitish and/or root bearing, remove that entire section of stem because water uptake is restricted through such stem ends. Do not pound stem ends; doing so will damage the stems’ vascular system and impair the uptake of water and nutrients.

**HYDRATION AND NUTRITION** Immediately after recutting the stems, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution. Then place the flowers into clean, disinfected containers partially filled with cold properly proportioned flower-food solution.

**REFRIGERATION** After processing stocks, immediately place them into a floral refrigerator at 33 F to 35 F, and allow them to hydrate for at least two hours before selling or arranging them. Except for design time, keep these flowers refrigerated until sold or delivered.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Stocks are moderately sensitive to ethylene gas, so check with your suppliers to ensure your purchases are treated with an ethylene inhibitor, preferably at the grower level or during shipping, and take steps to eliminate the production of ethylene in your department. Exposure to ethylene can cause transparent florets, accelerated aging and leaves to curve downward.

**CARE EXTRAS** To help prevent the development of mold on flower spikes and leaves, do not pack flowers tightly in storage containers, ensuring there will be adequate air circulation among the stems.

Also, change the nutrient solution in storage containers and recut stems every day or two because stock stems can quickly become slimy, contaminating vase solutions and producing unpleasant odors. One recommendation is to place stems into a bleach/water solution (one teaspoon bleach per gallon of water) for one hour prior to recutting them and placing them into hydration and flower-food solutions.

**CONSUMER ACTION** Instruct customers to recut stems of vase-arranged stocks and to change the nutrient solution every other day.

## purchasing tips

- Buy only stocks that have at least six — but no more than half — open florets per stem.
- Avoid bunches with smashed, flattened, bruised, brown, molded, rotted or otherwise infected florets; soft, limp flower spikes, leaves or stems; slimy stems; and/or yellow leaves.

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The genus *Matthiola* is named for Pier Andrea Mattioli (1501-1557), an Italian botanist and physician who was the personal doctor of Ferdinand II, Archduke of Austria, and Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor. The species name “*incana*” means hoary (hairy), in reference to the leaves’ fine whitish fuzz.

**FAMILY MATTERS** *Matthiola* is a member of the *Cruciferae/Brassicaceae* (mustard) family, which comprises a wide array of ornamental plants as well as vegetables, including candytuft (*Iberis*); madwort (*Alyssum*); money plant (*Lunaria*); watercress (*Nasturtium*); radish (*Raphanus*), horseradish (*Armoracia*) and Japanese horseradish (*Wasabia*); and kale, cabbage, broccoli/cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, turnip, mustard, mustard greens and collards (*Brassica*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** Stocks are native to the Mediterranean region including southern Europe, southwestern Asia and northern Africa. **sf**



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