Claude Monet

On nature: "I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers"

On landscaping: "My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece"

On color: "Color is my day-long obsession, joy and torment"

What's in Your Garden

Ada Brehmer and Anne Bettencourt, UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

- Devote a part of your garden solely to cut flowers.

- Make sure your plan includes an area large enough to contain a mix of flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs.

Consider what will grow in spring…

….what will grow in summer…..

.....fall.....

….and winter.

- **If this is not an option for you, you can still achieve a cutting garden by planting a variety of plants throughout your garden.**

Be sure that the taller varieties of plants are in the back of the garden so they don't shade the shorter plants. Plants that require "Full Sun" generally need 6+ hours of sun each day. Morning sun and some afternoon shade are preferred for plants that require full sun.

What's In YOUR Garden?

MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

Neil Diamond – Hybrid Tea

Lily of the Nile - Agapanthus

Alstroemeria

SAGE

Zinnias

Flowers grow best in well-drained and well-balanced soil.

As flower buds mature, fertilizers with a higher phosphorous content can be used (nitrogen tends to produce plants with beautiful leaves but limited blooms).

Understand the orientation of the flower garden, the Sun will always rise in the East and set in the West! Choose plants that are best suited for the location, for example, plants for full sun or plants for shade.

Stake taller plants to prevent damage due to wind, rain, or heavy growth. To avoid root damage it is a good idea to place the stake next to the plant when seeding or transplanting.

- **Use twine or twist ties around the stem to secure it to the stake. Tie the twine/twist tie securely around the stake and then loosely around the stem to form a figure 8.**

When watering the flower bed take care not to wet the foliage of the plant. Moisture on the leaves tends to make plants more susceptible to fungal disease. Disease can also be spread by splashing soil on the plant when watering. Drip irrigation, a soaker hose, or hand watering at the base of the plant are preferable.

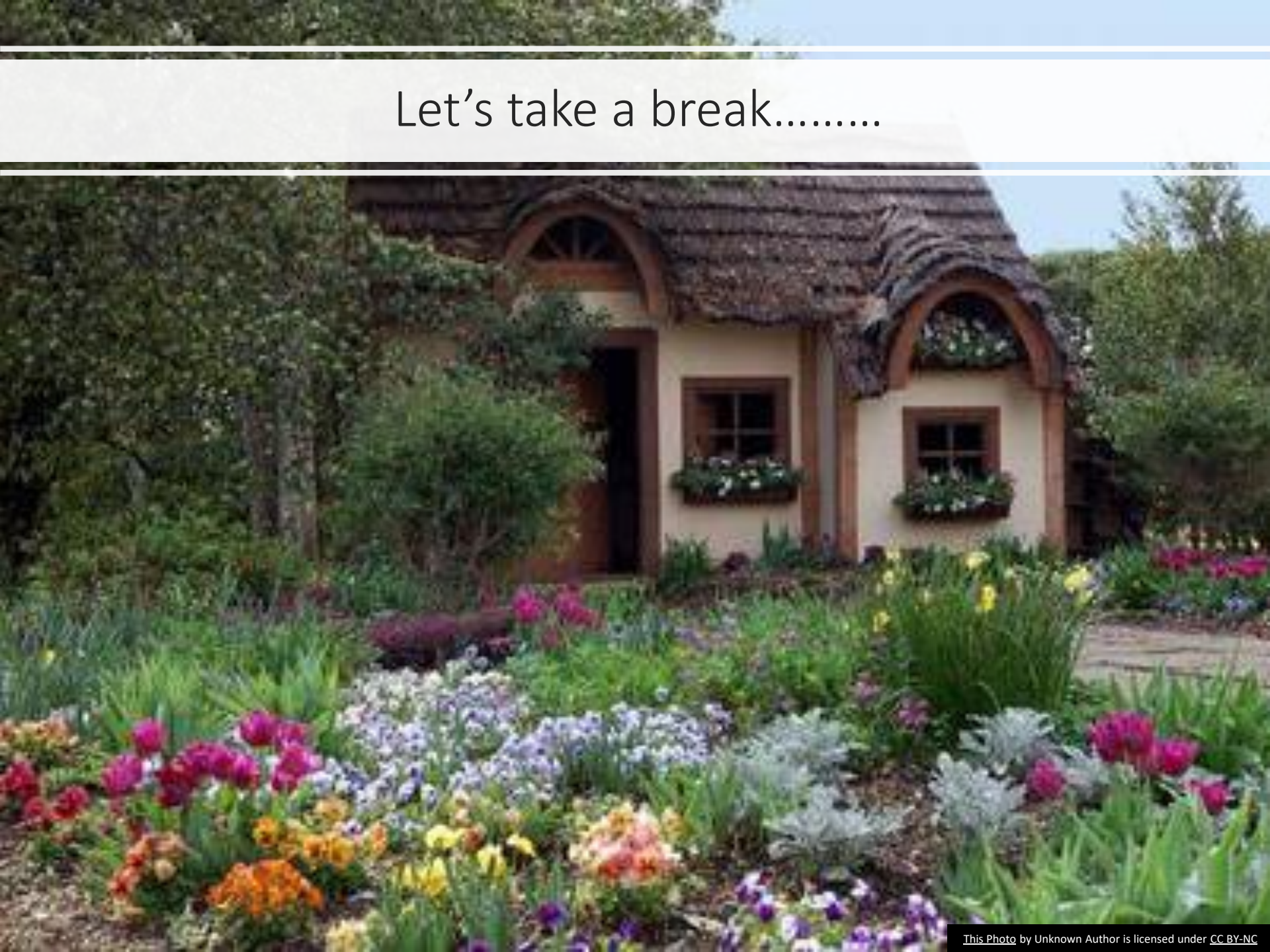
Not this……

…or this….

“A proper cutting garden should be virtually bloom free.” Cutting flowers encourages the plant to produce more blooms while discouraging seed production. Once the plant starts producing seeds, flower production slows or stops.

- **But, the color of flowers in the garden brings us great JOY, so leave some flowers in the garden for their beauty as well as to benefit pollinators. To encourage flower production, remember to cut these garden "beauties" before they go to seed.**

Let’s take a break…….



Proceed to the garden:

Be sure your tools are clean and sharp.

- Cut flowers in loose bud EXCEPT for dahlias, zinnias, marigolds where the flower will not develop from the bud.

For optimal vase life, cut flowers when the bud is about 50% to 75% open. On the opposite end, camellias will develop from even the tightest bud.

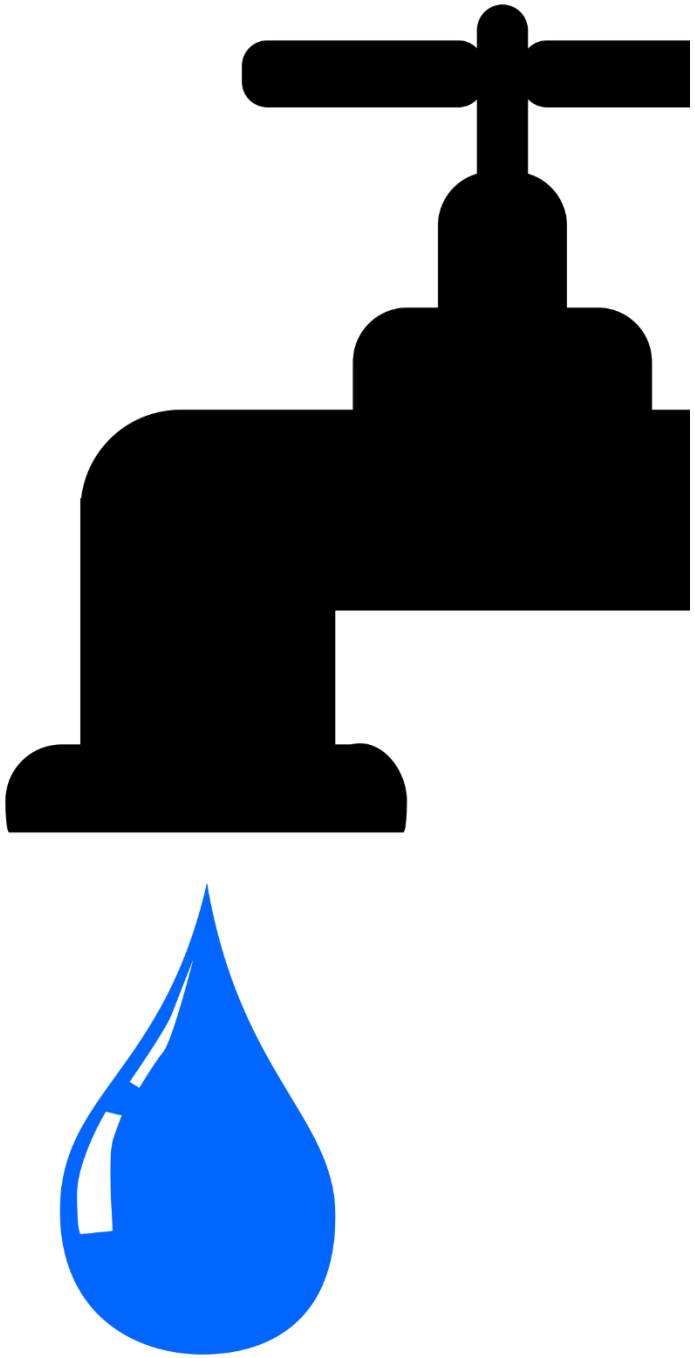
Cut the stems long.

Cut the stem all the way to the ground or to the main stem.

Long stems are easier to arrange.

Bulbs are the exception to cutting stems as long as possible since they need to have some leaves left for photosynthesis in order to store energy in their bulbs to carry them through the dormant season.

Have two buckets ready. Fill with two to three inches of lukewarm water.



Quickly place cut flowers in water.

Lukewarm water is best.

This process will allow the flower to take up water through the cut stem and alleviate the wilting of the flower.

Strip the bottom leaves as you go.

Use a wheelbarrow if you have several pails. Keep short and long-stemmed plants separate to avoid damage.

For larger/heavier blooms, carry cut flowers from the garden in a heads-down position so the heavy headed flowers won't snap.

Plan as you cut.

How many arrangements are you making?

Where will the arrangements be placed?

Conditioning..

Put flowers in a cool place.

Tepid water.

Overnight or through the day.

Let flowers have a good drink and it’s OK to add some cut flower food.

Conditioning……..

All stems should be re-cut, under water. This will avoid the risk of air locks forming in the capillary network of the stem. Make a flat cut for soft stems and a 45degree cut for woody stems.

Conditioning……..

Remove leaves to the water line, leaves in the water will put extra demand on the stem, the leaves will decay quickly and produce a bacterial soup which will stink and clog up the stem and shorten the life of other flowers.

The following will sound like flower torture…

But….if you have a flower, even roses, with a droopy head, dip the stem (about one inch deep) into boiling water for about 20 seconds, then dip into tepid water. The heads will perk up in the next hour or so.

This is call "searing" and is also used for plants that "leak" white milk from the cut. Searing will stop the flow which could be poisonous to other plants.

Next “torture”…

Hammer woody stems. Hammering the bottom 1 to 2 inches increases the surface area for better absorption.

Vases come in all shapes and sizes. Choose a vase that's appropriate for what you plan to do.

Care of Cut Flowers:
Bacteria and fungus are the enemy of cut flowers. Taking care to ensure that vases and tools are clean and sanitized will aid in the longevity of cut flowers.

Don't overcrowd flowers in the vase/container, it will tend to reduce the longevity of the arrangement.

To reduce underwater decay, strip flower stem of all foliage and thorns that fall below the water line.

Use lukewarm water to fill your vase. Check water level each day and replenish it frequently with lukewarm water.

Flowers that go limp are not drinking water well and need to be re-cut. Rinse newly cut stem under tepid water in order to flush any residual debris.

Discard wilted blooms.

Keep flowers away from drafts, direct sunlight, and ripening fruit which might emit ethylene gas (can cause buds to remain closed and shorten vase life).

Preservatives:

- Cut flowers need three ingredients to survive:

- 1 Carbohydrates necessary for cell metabolism.
- 2 Biocides to combat bacteria.
- 3 Acidifiers to adjust the pH of water and facilitate water uptake.

When flowers are severed from the plant they are deprived of essential substances. Commercial ready-made preservatives contain sugar for nutrition, bleach to keep water clear of bacteria, and citric acid.

Recipe for homemade flower preservative:

- 1 teaspoon of sugar (carbohydrate).
- 1 teaspoon of household bleach (biocides).
- 2 teaspoons of lemon or lime juice (acidifier).

ADVICE

- Avoid strict symmetry.
- Use an odd number of flowers.
  - 3 of your most glamorous flowers.
  - 5 middle sized flowers.
  - 9 or 11 “padding” flowers.
- Cut stems in a variety of lengths, push some into the heart of the arrangement, leaving others standing out.
- Arrange in three dimensions. Avoid short in front and tall in back, arrange in the round.
- Choose foliage – work with branches, seed heads (dill, fennel) and work on color contrast.

Now get a clean vase, 1/3 to 1/2 the height of the tallest flower or foliage.

Making a beautiful flower arrangement is easy.

THERE ARE NO HARD OR FAST RULES