

You can keep bridal flowers without chemical sprays by drying them upside down or pressing them between absorbent sheets. Begin soon after the wedding, while the blooms are fresh and before their petals start to wilt or turn brown.

Select and prepare the blooms

Sort through the bouquet and choose flowers that are clean, dry and in good shape. Bruises and brown edges will still show after drying, so leave out any blooms with those flaws. Take away ribbons, pins and other decorations, then gently remove damaged outer petals and extra leaves.

There is no need to save every stem. Choose a few flowers that are meaningful to you, and keep a small piece of greenery if you like its shape. You can leave the other flowers in water while you make your choices, but dry the stems before starting either method.

Some varieties are better suited to one method than another. Roses, lavender and statice often dry well when hung. Flat flowers and loose petals are usually easier to press than thick, rounded blooms.

Dry blooms by hanging them

Make a small bundle of stems and fasten it firmly with string. Hang it upside down in a dark, dry spot where air can move freely. A cupboard may be suitable if it is ventilated and the flowers have room, rather than being pressed against other stored items.

Leave space around each bundle so air reaches the petals. Sunlight can fade the flowers, and a damp room can slow the drying process, so keep them away from both. As the stems lose moisture, they shrink. Check the string

from time to time and tighten it if it has loosened.

Expect the drying process to take several weeks. The flowers are ready once their stems and petals feel dry, not cool or soft. Pick them up carefully because dried petals can break with little pressure. Their shape and color will change, and a few petals may drop off.

Press blooms for a flat memento

Choose pressing if you plan to put the flowers in a frame or album. Set individual blooms or petals between pieces of absorbent paper. Arrange each piece with enough space around it, and decide how much overlap you want before closing the paper.

Place the paper inside a heavy book, then set extra weight on the book. Put additional paper around the flowers to protect the pages from moisture. After a few days, check whether the paper is damp. If it is, replace it with dry sheets. Keep the flowers under weight until they are fully dry, a process that can also take several weeks.

Store pressed flowers in a closed album or frame them behind glass once they are dry. Protect pressed and hanging flowers from direct sunlight and humid conditions. Clean dried arrangements by dusting them gently, not by washing them.

Common questions about saving wedding flowers

Can I dry the bouquet without taking it apart?

You can hang the entire bouquet, but a dense arrangement may not dry evenly. Splitting it into smaller bundles lets air circulate more freely. When the stems are dry, you can put them back together as an arrangement.

Will preserved blooms keep their original appearance?

No. Petals become more delicate, and flower colors may either fade or darken as they dry. Take a photograph of the bouquet while it is fresh if you want a record of how it looked on the wedding day.

See also: church customs for funeral flowers