

Forcing Flowering Branches

By
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Got the winter blahs? Tired of snow and gloom? Longing for spring? Why not do something about it. Now, right now, is the time to get the jump on spring. Go into the garden, where ever you have bushes and low growing flowering trees, and cut some branches.

Here is an easy and very inexpensive process – forcing branches into bloom. Think about it, Forsythia in the living room two months before the come into flower in the garden. Pussy willows open in less than two weeks. Here’s your chance to experiment. Apple blossoms and cherry blossoms and even witch hazel can bring spring into your home in a relatively short time. And it is so easy.

Put on you boots and trudge out to the back yard and find a flowering bush, any of the above will do. Actually, you can do this as early as the first of February. If you have a Forsythia plant, this is a good place to start. It’s easy and it is quick. But with any plant you choose, be careful to select branches that will not alter the shape or beauty of the plant as the season progresses. In most cases your selected branches should be not less than 15 inches long and if you are a beginner, not much more than 24 inches. As you get the feel of it, it is not unusual to select 36 inch branches to place in a tall vase in the living room. Those results are spectacular. Look closely at the branch. Select those that have a lot of flower buds showing. Flower buds will be rounder and puffy, leaf buds will be more slender and, in most cases, you will see the green long before the flowers begin to open.

Take them indoors and submerge them in a tub or bathtub of tepid water for a couple of hours and then into a vase of warm water. The water bath treatment helps them to break their dormancy more quickly. Do NOT as is sometimes suggested, pound the stems with a hammer. This process will not aid water intake, but rather give a lot of dead plant material for bacteria and molds to feed on. For the first several days leave your branches

in a cool room and out of the direct sunlight. As soon as the first few flowers begin to open, it is time to move them to where you can enjoy the beauty. The closer to spring that you bring the branches in, the faster they will come into bloom. And, they will last longer if you move them to a cool room (40 to 60 degrees) when there is no one there to enjoy them or at night.

What makes this process even more interesting is that you are not limited to just Forsythia, although it is easiest and most showy. Spread your wings and visit all the flowering shrubs and trees in your garden (and perhaps your neighbor's) and you'll be surprised at the color and beauty you can achieve.

Red Bud has rose to magenta blooms and blooms in 2 or 3 weeks after cutting. Honeysuckle seems to be everywhere in the area. It makes a nice showing of white or pink flowers and takes about 2 weeks to flower after cutting. All of the apples and cherries (especially flowering cherries) pears and crab apples are wonderful candidates. Try them all and experiment with them. There are few set rules and every house is different. See what works best for you.

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Picture is from Wikipedia