

## gardening

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# Why Hans says it with flowers

Don't fall into the predictable red rose trap on Valentine's Day. **MANDY BRADSHAW** meets celebrity florist Hans Haverkamp, whose beautiful blooms are lighter on the wallet and heavier on the brownie points

**R**ED roses have long been the symbol of true love and a dozen blooms is a traditional token on Valentine's Day.

However, if like me, your sweetheart dislikes roses without scent or flowers forced wildly out of season, it's a gift that may fall well short of the mark. Add to that a price tag of up to £80 and it could be an expensive mistake.

The secret to Valentine's success is forward planning, advises Twynning florist Hans Haverkamp. "The most important thing is to go to your florist in advance and ask for advice. Ask them for suggestions, if you want something a bit different," he says.

Hans, who runs workshops showing people how to get the most out of flowers, believes that jumping on the red rose bandwagon shows as much thought as buying chocolates from a High Street store rather than a specialist shop.

"What's nicer, receiving three chocolates that have been hand-picked, or a box from one of the main chocolate

manufacturers? If you're going to buy someone flowers, at least put some thought into it," he adds.

At this time of year his top choice would be spring blooms, which will have been gently rather than brutally forced into flowering.

Hans, whose celebrity client list includes Andrew Lloyd Webber, recommends elegant tulips, in pastel or vibrant colours, scented hyacinths and freesias, anemones in jewel-like pinks, mauves and purples, ranunculus, with their peony-like blooms, and dainty grape hyacinths.

For a classy look, try a bouquet of a single variety, such as lilies, or mix tulips and hyacinths, for example, either in toning shades or with a striking contrast.

"Vibrant colours or soft colours, there's so much to go with."

If in doubt, opt for pastel shades rather than shocking yellows or orange.

The tactile buds of pussy willow are a favourite accompaniment to spring blooms, as are wands of forsythia or broom.

Alternatively, ask your florist to do a small arrangement, which can

give you more for less.

"For what you would spend on red roses you would be able to get the most beautiful arrangement of flowers," says Hans, adding that the high price of roses is purely down to supply and demand with the whole world wanting them on one day, forcing up the cost.

For something a little more lasting, he suggests a planter of spring bulbs or an unusual houseplant; *Medinilla magnifica*,

with its stunning pink flowers, is always a winner.

Above all, he believes that saying it with flowers is still the best way. "You should give flowers," he says. "Something natural has a much greater personal message than something that comes out of a factory."

The important thing is to make sure it's the right message.

■ For more information on Hans Haverkamp, visit [www.hansflowers.co.uk](http://www.hansflowers.co.uk)

## How to . . .

### Look after cut flowers

If you are lucky enough to receive flowers, follow these a basic steps to keep your flowers blooming . . .

Take flowers out of any water bags that they have been packed in. Cut spring flowers straight across with secateurs.

Cut roses and other blooms at an angle with a sharp knife to

avoid crushing the stems.

Put all flowers in deep water – warm is not necessary – in a clean vase, using any plant food that is supplied.

Daffodils are best displayed alone as the sap they give off stops other flowers taking up water. Change the water every two to three days to prolong the life of your blooms.



Celebrity florist Hans Haverkamp in his Twynning studio

## Open gardens

The following gardens are open under the National Gardens Scheme . . .

### TOMORROW

**Home Farm, Huntley, near Newent.** Exceptional views and a one-mile walk through woods and fields to see carpets of spring flowers. 2-5.30pm.

**Kempsford Manor, Kempsford, near Fairford.** Early spring garden

with variety of bulbs including snowdrop walk along old canal. 2-5pm. Teas.

### MONDAY

**The Old Rectory, Duntisbourne Rous, near Cirencester.** Garden in exceptional setting made by owner, writer Mary Keen. Designed for atmosphere. Collections of galanthus and hellebores. Plants and teas. 2-5pm.

## Weekend jobs . . .

- Enrich soil with compost where beans are going to be grown.
- Be careful not to damage any emerging bulbs when forking over border soil.
- Place forcing jars over clumps of rhubarb.
- Take cuttings from greenhouse chrysanthemums.
- Continue to dig over borders and vegetable plots to prepare ground for planting.
- Improve drainage on heavy soil by mixing in plenty of gravel or sharp grit.

## Batsford belles

Spring arrives in Batsford Arboretum next month with bulbs springing into life and daffodils cascading down the hillside in a blaze of sunshine. You'll also find wild spring flowers, and the first of the Japanese flowering cherries and Magnolia. It's open for the National Gardens Scheme on March 3 from 10am-5pm.

The Horticultural Trades Association's plant of the month for February is the Camellia, which is ideal for romantics looking for a floral gift as the fragrant flower represents desire, passion and perfection and comes in light pinks, dark reds and whites.

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