

THE STAMFORD GARDEN CLUB'S
CONDITIONING FOR ARRANGEMENTS



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We are grateful to the New Canaan Garden Club whose booklet "General Rules for Flower Conditioning" gave us inspiration and was the basis which was expanded to make information available to our members. Also, to thank the Garden Club of America for permission to include material from their Bulletins.

Proceeds are donated for the benefit of the Civic Fund of the Stamford Garden Club, Stamford, Connecticut.

I. CONDITIONING WATER

Majority of flowers and shrubs prefer slightly acid water, excepting lovers of very sweet soil. If uncertain of your water, use blue litmus paper to test it (acid turns reddish).

To make water acid: to each quart, add 1 heaping tablespoon sugar and 2 table-
spoons white distilled vinegar; or use a commercial flower preservative according to directions (never in metal container).

To make water sweet: add 2 tablespoons sugar to 1 quart water.

To retard bacterial growth and decay, add 1/8 teaspoon boric acid per quart when conditioning.

Color loss drops

For temperature of water, see "Cutting."

CUTTING

Cut first thing in morning, or late in day (flowers and stems stronger from sun, often last longer). Generally cut when about half open. Draw pail of hot water 100° to 110° (more readily absorbed and eliminates shock) to depth of at least 1/3 length of stems. If cold water specified, use from tap or room temperature. Allow pail to sit 5 minutes to eliminate air bubbles. If needed, "doctor" water or apply special formula (i.e., sear in garden). Use Japanese shears or sharp knife on slant.

Special Note: Flowers have different characteristics which require particular treatments. Beyond this, there are many flowers that require further special handling. These will be found alphabetically listed in Section VII.

To minimize great repetition, Key of Letters and Numbers has been used.

III CONDITIONING PROCEDURES (Allowing flowers to soak and harden a few hours)

Plunge stem immediately in water, unless special treatment required at once.

Treat upon bringing in, condition and repeat if necessary when arranging.

While conditioning, keep out of drafts and heat. Pluck off any bruised or diseased blossoms or petals, as they can affect the other flowers.

A. Woody stems scrape up 6" and double slit 2" in stems. Blossoms and woody branches hammer, spray often with cold water.

B. Milky or fluid stems cut straight, not slant; sear to count of 10, or in boiling water to 2" above cut for 30 seconds (few seconds to 2 minutes, depending upon stem thickness and hardness) then into cold water. When "boiling" protect flower heads by

holding stems on slant or wrap heads and leaves with damp paper or cloth. Sear with cigarette lighter or candle flame (firm candle in taller glass protects flame from breeze). Some will require cold water (i.e., azalea).

C. Fleshy stems recut under water when brought in and when arranging (releases air bubbles formed).

D. Hollow stems force feed with water, medicine dropper or pump (prevents air bubbles). When filled place finger over stem and immerse in water pail (sugar water). O and see "When Arranging."

E. Do not place stem in water. Pack in moist newspapers after spraying with fine mist (don't spray if petals spot).

F. Squeeze out liquid in stem (hardens and prevents water absorption).

G. Strip leaves and keep foliage above water line.

H. Remove all white section of stem (found below ground and inside leaf); (will not suck water).

I. Submerge for conditioning.

WHEN USING CHEMICALS, cut under water, dry; then into chemical solution; (if added to water, stir well).

J. Rub salt (not iodized) in cut end.

K. Denatured alcohol or gin.

L. Dip in tincture of Capsicum.

M. Hydrochloric acid 10% - USE CARE, dip in acid 2-3 seconds. Handle carefully-- it stains. Don't use metal container. Use where no pets can drink from container.

N. Rub dry powdered aspirin into stem.

O. Dip in peppermint oil; for soft and hollow stems rub, not dip.

P. Wood alcohol.

IV WHITE CONDITIONING

Condition in cool, humid place at least 2 hours; preferable to leave overnight. Often helpful to spray surrounding air with fine mist.

If refrigerated use normal temperature 40° to 50°. Keep away from fruit, they give off ethylene gas. In handling white or easily damaged flowers, the Japanese keep blossoms wrapped in soft tissue paper until arrangement is complete.

Q. Some flowers will spot if sprayed directly.

R. Keep air tight in hydrator or plastic in refrigerator, covered with moist cotton.

S. Stems bend, to keep straight, wrap in paper.

T. For curve, allow flower head to hang over pail.

U. Flowers with milky fluid or sap should be alone, as fluid will plug stems of other flowers.

Some flowers can be successfully stored several weeks in refrigeration if just above freezing point (33-35°) and protected from dehydration by wrapping in plastic, especially roses and peonies.

V WHEN ARRANGING

Be sure to use well scrubbed containers, (to remove water deposit from crystal, soak overnight in tea or vinegar solution, or 1 part rubbing alcohol to 1 part water).

USE CORRECT WATER, commercial preservative excellent; if like hot water, use it.

A tablespoon of chlorox in water will kill bacteria, or 1/8 teaspoon boric acid to quart of water will retard decay.

Remove all very new foliage tips from branches (will wilt). Be sure no foliage under water, unless completes design.

Wrapping particular stems with florist tape prevents splitting.

Air must reach stems, don't crowd mouth.

To bend branches, dip in warm water (sap runs through), bend the way you wish, dip in ice water, line will set.

1. Woody stems re-silt for pin holder, hammer for bouquets.
2. Fleshy stems, re-smash, dry, wrap with florist tape.
3. Thick fleshy stems, tear strips off (besides making smaller, becomes stabilizing effect on tulips and anemones).
4. Milky stems or fluid stems, re-sear, or repeat boiling water, be certain to protect flower heads.
5. Bulb stems, dry and wrap with florist tape. Remember shallow water (will drown).
6. Hollow stems, cut stem end upwards, plug with cotton wool.
7. Re-cut under water.
8. Remember when using chemicals, re-cut under water, dry, re-apply.

VI CARE OF COMPLETED ARRANGEMENTS

Place completed arrangements in cool spots, away from drafts and direct sunlight. Avoid cold window panes in winter. Helpful to move to cooler spot at night. Add fresh water as needed, mist regularly. If for several weeks, add piece of charcoal to water.

Many FRUITS and some VEGETABLES give off ethylene gas, which shortens life of flowers. If it is to last, best not to have fruit arrangements in same room with flowers, except grapes and grapefruit.

Should arrangement keep well, but a few flowers start to wilt, remove them, re-cut under water, and re-condition. Spray foliage and keep in deep water several hours. Re-arrange; (an aspirin may be added to the water). For bulb plants, see tulips.

To change water in completed arrangement, use baster or siphon to remove water.

VII FLOWERS REQUIRING SPECIAL HANDLING

Foliage directions follow separately. In some instances, more than one method is listed (not in order of preference); practice will determine your choice. To minimize great repetition, a Key of Letters and Numbers has been used.

LETTERS refer to "Conditioning" section and "While Conditioning" section.

NUMBERS refer to "When Arranging" section.

NUMBER IN PARENTHESES refer to days or weeks a flower may last.

Acacia E, 0, for 2-3 seconds.

Aconite 0, 2-3 seconds.

African Violet C, 7.

Amaryllis Pick in bud, split ends, wrap stem, Tbs. 0 to qt. water.

Anchusa C.

Anemone Cut 1/2 to fully open, C, 3, fine shavings of Ivory soap in water, (including arrangement), or 1/2 cup vinegar to 2 cups water. (1w)

Anthurium Harden in 3-4" water.

Apple Blossoms Cut diagonally in bud, A; 5 drops M per gal. water or 2 tbsp. ammonia to 2 qts. water; 1.

Artemisia Sear and 4.

Aster Cut when 3/4 open, G remove all; B sear, 0; tbs. sugar to qt. water make heads stand up. Re-cut and recondition to prolong; (7).

Azalea Sear and 4, or dip in 10% solution P. Plunge in cold water with tsp. each vinegar and sugar, or with gin.

Balloon Flower Sear and 4.

Balsam Slit cut end and 0.

Begonia Tbs. salt to qt. water to harden; condition few hours only, will become waterlogged.

Bellflower Boiling water.

Berried Shrubs (Holly - Juniper - Pyracantha) coat with transparent wax, plant glaze, or plastic (reduces water loss.) (Question if permitted for show.)

Bittersweet Cut before heavy frost when at its best. Spray with clear plastic to last.

Bleeding Heart 4 to 5 florets open. Sear cut ends and 4, can dip in L.

Bluebells Boiling water B, then cold water.

Bougainvillea 0 for few seconds or I. Remove all leaves.

- Bouvardia E, R.
- Bridal Wreath Cut when 1/4 branch is in bloom.
- Buddleia 3/4 to full open. Sear and 4.
- Butterfly Bush Repeat conditioning in hot water, if necessary, until stems become stiff.
- Calendulas Cut in bud shape, condition in 80° water; use ice cubes when arranging, (7+ days).
- Camellia Prolong life, sprinkle blossom sparingly with salt; cover damp paper towel, R.
- Campanula Sear (7+ days).
- Canterbury Bells Sear, to shape straight stems, condition with some stems placed at an angle.
- Cardinal-Flower Sear, 4.
- Carnation 1/2 to fully open, cut between joints, remove little or no foliage. Keeps well in 3" water. Can add 5 0 to 2 qts. water; or B boiling and rub dry boric acid on stems, or 1/2 tsp. boric acid to 2 qts. water. Sprinkle with ice water occasionally will prolong, also 7 and reconditioning, (7+ days).
- Caryopteris 0, 2-3 seconds.
- Cattail Acid water to harden, spray head with clear plastic.
- Celosia Crush stems, plunge in cold water 2 hours.
- Cherry Blossom Break off stems, sear, condition in cold water, 5 drops 0 in 2 qts. water, (7+ days).
- Chrysanthemum Snap off rather than cut, when fully open. Sift ends or burn 2-3", cold water 2 hours can add few drops of O; G (doesn't hold too well). Arrange in deep water 80°, can add 1/2 cup sugar to last or N, (3 weeks). If suddenly fade, re-break stems, place in boiling water (protect heads) until cold.
- Clematis Cut just as one or two buds have opened, with some old wood if possible; K alone, or three tbsp. with a pinch of soda to one pt. of water.
- Clivia C.
- Coleus Sear and 4.
- Columbine Drop of 0 or J, or K, before placing in cold water 2 hours.
- Cornflower M, (week +).
- Cosmos 0 or J.
- Cowslips Sear, weak solution tobacco juice (See Lotus), 4.

Cyclamen Pull from bulb, C, 3-4" water to harden, add boric acid 1/2 tsp. to 2 qts. water.

Daffodil Cut when beginning to open, H or cut and K or dip few seconds in diluted salt water; condition in 1" of cold water 2 hours; S, 5; can be wired, but be careful to run just to head, never into it. - GIN;

Dahlia Cut after sun goes down. Cut when fully matured or cut before really open (bud stage), cut above joint (stalk has more open end). G at least 1/3rd, condition B and deep cold water; N or 1/2 tsp. P to qt. water.

Daisies 1/2 to full open. 8 drops O to qt. water, (week +)

Datura Pick before fully open, I.

Day Lily Cut in bud, showing color and refrigerate. Will open at night (1).

Delphinium D and 6, condition in deep container with 3 cups chlorox, in dark cool room. Pick day before, must stay in chlorox (won't hurt other flowers in arrangement). Can use K, 2 tbsp. to pt. water.

Deutzia O, 2-3 seconds.

Dianthus Tbsp. K to pt. water.

Dogwood Crush stems, peel off outer skin, can use M. If wilting, dip reconditioned stems in 10% M solution, stand in cold water 2 hours.

Euphorbia Sear, (week).

Flowering Almond Cut when buds swell.

Flowering Branches When buds are showing color, cut pencil size or larger branches. A.

Flowering Fruits In bud, I in cold water before regular hardening.

Forget-Me-Not Sear and condition in cold water, 4.

Foxglove Boil and 4; or O, 2-3 seconds; cold water 1 hour.

Freesia 1/2 tsp. P to qt. water (3-4"); C; condition in refrigerator overnight, cover container tightly with paper. (4)

Fuchsia B and 4, harden in 3-4" cold water.

Galax 2, E.

Gerardia E sear; make notched incision in stem, under water, at base; mist with cold water.

Geranium I, 2-3 seconds; can defoliate.

If wilted, re-cut, put in warm water
put in frig.

Gerbera 3/4 to fully open, sear, 3-4"
water.

Geum Sear and 4.

Gladiolus Cut at 2 PM sunny day; or leave
out of water until slightly wilted.
Cut when 2nd flower on spike begins
to open. Break rather than cut. C
condition in cold water, arrange in
water 4-5" deep. Snap off bottom
flowers against stem as fade, (week +)

Gloxinia Cut before open, soak in sugar
solution, or 0 for 5-6 seconds.

Grape Hyacinth Sear and cold water, 5.

Heliotrope 3/4 to full open. Sear and
cold water, G.

Helleborus (niger, Christmas rose; orientalis
Easter) B hot water or sear, protect
flowers with plastic bag tied 1/2
down, 2. If wilting, I.

Hibiscus Non-hybrid place in refrigerator
overnight, pick before completely
unfurled. If for evening, doubles
hold best, pick by 10:30 AM; place
in middle of refrigerator, float.

Hollyhock Boiling salted water or sear;
remove all but smallest tip leaves, 2.
One tbsp. salt to qt. water to harden.
See delphinium.

Hoya Cut only heads.

Hyacinth H, F, Plunge boiling water
(protect heads), then cold water;
condition and 5.

Hydrangea Break, not cut, moderately
old wood; sear or boiling salt water,
and cold water. Wet blossoms tho-
roughly and often, I especially hot
weather. 1/4 cup vinegar to qt. water.

Iris Cut in bud, or no more than one
blossom. B sear and cold water,
3-4" water. Stems can be bent care-
fully; buds made to open in warm water
in 1-2 hours. (1 week)

Lantana Sear.

Larkspur 3/4 to full open. Remove budded
stalks from main stalk (drain water
supply), 1/2 tsp. P to 2 qts. water
1/2 hour or tsp. sugar to qt. of water.

Laurel Pinch of aluminum sulphate in water.

Lilac Cut when panicle is 1/4 to 1/2 open,
A, G all foliage, except leaf near
flower head. If using leaves, keep
separate from flowers while condition-
ing. If begin to wilt submerge 2 hrs.
sweet water

Lily Arum Strip off some of stem.

Calla H, shallow water, 2 wrap, S.
Bend by holding stems gently and firmly
rubbing under side of stem. Stain.
See foliage.

Easter Silt; remove yellow stamens
with tweezers (stain), Q (10 days).

Other lilies Turn upside down, hold
under tap water 1 minute. Then into
deep water (1/4 cup vinegar to 1 qt.
water) remove stamen.

Peruvian Shallow water, remove stamens.

Lily-of-the-Valley B sear or boiling,
3-4" cold water 2 hours; I cold water
1/2 hour.

Loosestrife A silt; O, 2-3 seconds.

Lotus 3-4" water to harden, use L or
cooled strong tea, or tobacco stock
(squeeze cigarette tobacco, in cloth,
in water); or immerse in water in
which it has been growing.

Lupine D and 6; or L, 5 seconds.

Magnolia Cut in bud, G, and immerse in
water; or sear A, or M.

Marguerite Dip hot water; or L, 4-5
seconds; S.

Marrigold Cut when 3/4 open, G 1/3; C;
1 tbsp. salt to qt. to harden; re-
conditioning prolongs life.

Milk Weed Sear B.

Mockorange Pick in bud and defoliate.

Morning Glory Cut with fingernail in
evening when closed; wrap soft paper;
sear B, or crush and J; stand in deep
water overnight; a rusted pin stuck
in stem prolongs bloom.

Narcissus Pick as color shows. F, H, can
use K; 5. Don't pick if tip of petals
transparent.

Nasturtium Condition 2-3 hours to take
shape, little salt in water, or I 5 sec.

Oleander Sear B, or defoliate and I.

Orchids Cut stem on diagonal in water,
keep in vial. Take out of vial each
day 1 hour (petals become water logged);
re-cut each 2 days; refrigerate 52-55°,
(3-4 weeks) Q.

Pansy Remove little or no foliage, C,
3-4" cold water, (1 week). Incompatible
with other flowers.

Peach Blossoms A and cold water 2 hours
or more.

Peony Cut densely-petaled double when half open; single and semi-double, and Japanese while in tight bud. G most, slit or crush 4" up; tsp. sugar to qt. water, (up to 5 weeks).

Tree Peony Sear B, then dip in K few seconds.

Petunias Add salt to water; or L 5 seconds.

Phlox Slit, C, M.

Pinks Cut above joint, boil B.

Plum Blossom (See Peach), and J then sear; or if has green leaves O few seconds.

Plume-Poppy B sear, tbs. salt to qt. water.

Poinsettia B sear or boil plus I or L, 4 seconds; cold water; float in water. To leave out of water: day before strip leaves above and below where you will cut, allow to bleed and heal. When cut, immediately place stem in sand. Completely submerge flower and leaves overnight.

Pond Lily Pressure strong tea in through vein (see D), cold water.

Polyanthus Re-cut under water.

Poppy B sear; ^{with candle.} or can O, 4 seconds, cold water. Little melted wax or liquid gelatine into flower heart, hold open.

Iceland Cut in bud stage, B sear cold water.

Primrose B Boiling, C cold water salt added; lasts better in tight bunches.

Queen Anne's Lace Defoliate, I deep water.

Quince B boiling 5 minutes, deep cold water 3 hours.

Roses ^{non-fragrant} As second petal opens. Cut 4-4:30 PM (sugar content high), buds soft, B sear or scrape outer cambium layer off; slit 1-2", C and J or K few seconds very hot acid water; or 2 tbs. K to pt. water for conditioning and arranging. If wilt, submerge head in warm water few seconds, then re-cut stem and plunge in hot water and in refrigerator overnight in 3" water.

Rhododendron & Laurel A and to harden acid water. ^{throw off on arrangements}

St. Johnswort Cut fully open and slit or B sear.

Salvia Dip O or L few seconds.

Scabiosa C.

Skunk Cabbage I, soak overnight (removes some odor), clorox in water.

Snapdragons A slit, deep water, 3 tbs. baking soda to 2 qts. water; can O few seconds; T. Re-cutting and re-conditioning prolongs life (10 days).

^{put in cold water}
^{depends to some with}

Snow-on-the-Mountain B sear.

Spiraea O, 3-4 seconds.

Stephanotis B sear, cold water.

Mrs. George Kent says "blossoms may be dipped in warm paraffin" (not for show').

Stock A, G all, cold water. Snap off top buds (2-3 weeks).

Sumac B sear, then L few seconds; or submerge few hours.

Sunflower Late afternoon, B sear or dip in vinegar few seconds.

Sweetpea 3/4 to fully open (the more often picked, more flowers). C, warm, not hot water (3-4"); arrange never more 1/3 stem in water; tsp. K to qt. water; Q. Can be re-cut and reconditioned.

Syringa A split, defoliate, soak.

Tuberose C, Tbs. salt to qt. water.

Tuberous Begonia R, Q, E.

Tulip Cut in advanced bud stage, H, B boiling 1 min.; or K 3-4 sec.; or J; 3. Prevent from opening too quickly, pinch stem at base of flower with fingers or stick knife through. Condition at least 2-3 hours (take final shape), protect heads. To stand up straight S or pin through head of flower where meets stem (air bubble out), or

dash with egg white where you want it to stay.

copper penny in water when arranging, (1 week). To bend, T. Do not mix with narcissus. If should topple over, try removing from water; when it becomes limp, wrap in greaseproof paper; cut stems, put in shallow water; when stiff again, re-arrange. *defoliate to arrange*

Verbena M.

Violet Cut when fully open, invert in saucer of water (drink through faces) E, condition in cold water overnight. Mist often when arranged.

Vitex Cut when spikes showing color on few buds, G all.

Water Lily Cut tight bud (long stem), plunge immediately in ice water, refrigerate (shock keeps open); or wrap stem, D, slowly inject water into stems of leaves and flowers with pump, 6. Solution 3/4 water 1/4 K prevents from closing, or wax dropped around petal base.

Wallflowers Defoliate.

Wild Flowers Use warm water.

Wisteria Cut in evening, take some old wood; A slit, 4 water to 1 K; O, 3-4 seconds; or J then sear.

Yarrow O few seconds.

Zinnia Cut when fully open, G, can sear; or O few sec.; cold water, (7 days). Last longer if more horizontal than vertical.

VIII CONDITIONING FOLIAGE

Don't pick greens and shrubs that have not hardened. Foliage should be washed, if necessary, and submerged in cold water (bath tub excellent) for an hour or more to condition. The older the foliage, the longer submerged. Dry carefully and keep in the hydrator in a plastic bag until time for use.

EVERGREEN FOLIAGE should be washed in lukewarm ivory suds and then soaked in cold water for 24 hours. Shake well. When arranging, add charcoal to keep water sweet.

BRANCHES of trees, evergreen or fruit-bearing split end couple inches, or crush by hammering. If too large to cut, strip off most bark under water.

VINES, IVY submerge flat in bathtub overnight.

SPECIAL TREATMENTS:

Arum leaves Submerge, soak overnight.

Azalea Sear.

Beech Silt stems and condition in hot water in copper container.

Bamboo Does not draw up water after cut, drill or pierce hole down through center of main branch to bottom node, fill with water. If not possible, small hole under each node and fill each section.

Banana Plant Dip in acetic acid 5-6 sec.

Cabbage Leaves Lay flat, submerged. Head Ice water overnight, gently roll back leaves to shape as opening rose.

Calla Lily Pierce foliage with darning needle along stem, harden submerged in tub with baking soda added.

Coleus, Caladium Leaves Submerge in ice water.

Cyclamen Leave in deep water overnight.

Euphorbia Sear.

Ferns Place between tissue or newspaper, wet thoroughly, leave for a time, or char cut stems. Do not place stems in water.

submerged in ice water - in bathtub
Fronds Can be wrapped in paper soaked in cold water and tied with string. Cut away after arranging.

Maidenhair Keep part of leaf submerged to feed.

Holly Float in water until used.

Linden Sear, and dip in capsicum.

Lychins Split and dip in capsicum.

Lythrum Hydrochloric acid.

Maple Split cut end into 4 parts; rub salt in well, and burn; dip in vinegar, tincture of capsicum or alcohol for 3-4 sec.; or hydrochloric acid. To prevent leaves from curling, spray with glycerine or thin sugar water.

Palm Leaf Float before use.

Palmetto Submerge 24 hours and then shape.

Periwinkle Peppermint oil or capsicum 3-4 seconds.

Pyracantha Spray berries with clear plastic, prevents drop. (Question for show).

Rex Begonia Submerge flat in bathtub overnight.

Rhododendron & Laurel Deep tub 4 hours, charcoal in arranging water.

Water Lily Pad Will float if pump gin into stem and soak 2 hours; or pump water into stem until all leaf veins filled with water, plug opening with finger until in water.

Willow Dip 1/2" in boiling water until leaves slightly wilted, soak cold water 2 hours.

BENDING TO SHAPE

Foliage branches can be gently bent to shape (twist not bend, shouldn't crack) and then secured with string and conditioned. If they are heavy; leave out of water until limp, then bend and condition. Soak evergreens in warm water until limp, also scotch broom. Smear daffodil foliage with juice from cut end of the flower, dry, bend to desired shape.

IX FORCING BRANCHES

Flowers will not be as large, nor last as long. Wait until hard January frost. On mild, preferably rainy day, cut branches about noon. Buds should be large, cut at least 18". Split ends, scrape off bark 4-5" (hammer non-soft pulpy twigs); soak in warm tub of water overnight. Place in pail of water in light room out of direct sunlight, best warm and humid. Add charcoal to water, or change regularly. Place in sun after buds start to break until blooms come, then keep cool and away from sun. If coming too soon for particular time, retard them in cool deep water in very cool room. If bringing in ones about to open, place branches in sealed box exposed to ammonia or other strong-smelling chemical for 1/2 hour. Then crush stems and place in deep water in sunny spot. Spray often.

Early bloomers force easier, but last short time. Cut closer to normal blooming, less time required for forcing. A general rule is to cut 6-8 weeks ahead of blooming time.

The following force readily:

Andromeda	Hawthorn
Apple	Leucothoe
Azalea	Lilacs
Beauty Bush	Magnolia
Bridal Wreath	Mockorange
Cornelian Cherry	Pussy Willow
Crab Apple	Redbud
Deutzia	Rhododendron
Dogwood	Sweet Alder
Flowering Almond	Shadblow
Flowering Cherry	Spicebush
Flowering Quince	Sumac
February Daphne	Winter Hazel
Forsythia	Wisteria
Fothergilla	Witch Hazel

Any flower with milky juice
needs to be scalded - with
candle (tuberous begonias)

condition or leave 2 days
before show

hard:
put in warm water - let stand
hard - when hard put in ice water.