

Force Flowering Shrub Branches to Bloom Indoors



Create an early springtime indoors by bringing in branches of flowering shrubs and forcing them into early bloom. Forsythia, spirea, and flowering cherry and plum are good plants for forcing indoors. Witch hazel, flowering crab apple, winter jasmine and flowering quince also will burst into blossom with a little care.

First, select branches from shrubs and trees in the yard. Look for those with fat flower buds. Cut a two- to three-foot length of branch and take it indoors. Make a one or two inch slit in the base of the branch to allow for easier water intake. Place the branch in a deep pail of water and leave it in a room with cool temperatures until the buds swell and begin to show color. The process can be done in a light or dark room.

Branches with fat buds will show a little color in four to eight days. Tiny budded branches may take longer to show color. Once the buds show some color, place the pail and branches in the normally heated part of the house. The flowers should be in full bloom in a day or two and will last about a week.

The flowers will have a longer life if they are kept in a cool spot away from drafts caused by heating vents. Make new fresh cuts on the cut end of the branches every couple days to help water intake.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.