

## Forcing Woody Plants to Color

Did you know you can enjoy plant stems in full bloom indoors while the temperatures outside are still wintery! This practice of bringing woody plant stems indoors to push them into breaking bud ahead of Mother Nature's outdoor schedule is called "forcing". Once woody plants have experienced approximately 6 weeks of cold, winter temperatures, their flower and foliage buds will open up if provided warm temperatures and some moisture.



Here are a few tips for forcing woody plants.

**First**, choose plant stems that have flower buds on them during the winter. Cornelian Cherry Dogwood, Forsythia, Cherry, Bradford Pear, Redbud, Lilac, Magnolia, PJM Rhododendron, Quince and Serviceberry all make good choices.

**Second**, prune stems at the end of January and throughout February. Select stems that are preferably less than one half inch in diameter. Look for stems with nice, fat flower buds on them and prune when the temperatures are a bit warmer.



**Third**, bring the stems indoors and submerge them in hot water. Recut the base of the stems at a sharp angle while underwater. Put them in a decorative vase of lukewarm water to display. You can add some floral preservative or Listerine to the water to keep it fresher, if desired.

**Lastly**, place the vase in INDIRECT light conditions and change the water weekly as you would for fresh flowers. In about two weeks you'll see foliage and/or flowers emerging from the stems!

**Enjoy the spring display!**

