

How to choose a florist

Why the delivered arrangement differs from the photo, how substitution works, and what to do when flowers arrive damaged

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Flowers are bought at the worst possible moment - for a funeral, a birthday, an apology - which is exactly when people compare least and pay most. Knowing how substitution and delivery cut-offs work takes ten minutes and prevents the disappointment that matters most.

What it should cost

Arrangements are usually priced in bands - \$50, \$80, \$120 - and the band determines the quantity and quality of stems rather than a specific recipe. Delivery is charged separately, often by distance or postcode. Ask for the delivered price, because that is the number that matters.

Same-day delivery has a cut-off, typically early in the day, and often a different cut-off for same-day orders to rural areas. Island and remote deliveries should be treated as next-day or longer.

Seasonal and imported stems move the price substantially. If you want something specific out of season, ask what it will cost before ordering rather than after.

What the law requires

Fresh flowers are goods under the Australian Consumer Law and must be of acceptable quality. Flowers that arrive wilted, damaged or materially different from what was agreed are a problem the seller must remedy.

Where a florist substitutes stems, it should be a reasonable substitution of equal or greater value and the customer should be told. Substituting a cheap filler for a premium stem without saying so is a misrepresentation.

If the florist cannot deliver on the promised date, that is a failure to meet the agreed purpose and you are entitled to a remedy - but only if the promise was made, which is why it should be in writing.

Red flags

A website photo presented as an exact representation of what will be delivered.

Delivery timing promised vaguely rather than with a window.

Substitution without disclosure.

No answer about what happens if the flowers arrive damaged.

A price quoted for the arrangement with delivery added only at checkout.

What good looks like

The delivered price is stated up front.

The substitution policy is explained before you order, not after.

They offer to photograph the arrangement before it goes out.

The delivery window is specific.

They tell you honestly what is in season and what will disappoint.

What to ask

- "What is the delivered price, including delivery?"
- "What is the same-day cut-off, and does it change for the address I am sending to?"
- "If you have to substitute, how do you decide what replaces what, and will you tell me?"
- "Can I see a photo of what actually went out?"
- "What do I do if they arrive damaged?"
- "How long will they last if they are delivered today?"

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