



## JUST SAY NO! TO FLORAL FOAM

Floral foam is a remarkable product of great convenience. Not only does it hold up to 50 times its weight in water, but it can support a flower or foliage stem in a desired position and conduct water into the stem. It can be easily cut and shaped to fit into a container, and it is cheap to purchase, especially when compared with the cost of fresh flowers. This industry-changing, dense, lightweight, and porous product was invented in 1954 by the Smithers-Oasis company.

### Floral Foam is Plastic

It's not the same type of plastic that's found in packaging; it's more similar to insulation foam. And although this product does crumble easily, it doesn't fully dissolve or degrade. At least not in several lifetimes. It breaks down into tiny pieces known as **microplastics**. These microplastics take thousands of years to decompose completely. In the meantime, they're easily spread, polluting water sources, consumed by organisms, and possibly harming human and wildlife health as they enter water systems and the food chain.

### Toxic Stuff?

If you're exposed to this type of foam, could you suffer from irritation to your eyes, skin, and respiratory tract? This is because you likely inhale dust or maybe even fumes while using the product? Possibly. Floral foam is made with carbon black, formaldehyde, and phenolic foam. Yes, known carcinogens are used to make floral foam! To add insult to injury, several studies have found that prolonged exposure to formaldehyde is associated with certain forms of cancer.

However, it's important to put these facts into perspective- I couldn't find a definitive answer regarding the amount of these chemicals found in the final product, so it is probably unlikely that arranging flowers with exposure to a relatively low level of formaldehyde would increase your chances of getting cancer. Yet I can't help but think why mess with it at all? There isn't enough information either way.

## **Floral Foam Banned**

In January 2020, the Royal Horticultural Society announced it was banning floral foam. So, since 2023, it hasn't been used in RHS shows. This means that designers, including those participating at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, have had to find alternative methods for creating their displays.

## **Floral Foam Alternatives**

- **Flower Frogs**
- **Chicken wire and tape grids**
- **Sticks, natural elements, dried angel vine**
- **Holly Pillow (click for link)**