

Florists can reuse buckets by removing old water and plant matter, washing and disinfecting each container, then allowing it to dry before storage. Inspect every bucket for damage or contamination before putting it back into service.

Clean containers between deliveries

Water that remains in a bucket may contain plant debris and microbes. After unpacking a delivery, empty the container without delay and clear away leaves, stem fragments and other visible waste. Keep used buckets apart from clean ones to prevent them being confused during a busy shift.

Scrub every area that contacted flowers or water, including the base, walls and rim. Residue can leave a slippery coating even when the bucket appears clean, so check the surface by touch as you work. Disinfectant is more effective after dirt and residue have been removed.

Select a disinfectant that is suitable for the bucket material and follow the directions on its label. Check the instructions for the correct dilution, the length of time surfaces must remain wet and whether a rinse is required afterward. Use the protective equipment specified on the label. Never combine cleaning chemicals.

Steps for preparing buckets for reuse

1. **Empty and check.** Discard the old water, remove plant material and examine the bucket for cracks, deep scratches or residue that resists cleaning.
2. **Wash all surfaces.** Use water and detergent to scrub the inside and rim. Clean the exterior and handle as well, particularly when transport has left them dirty.

3. **Rinse away dirt and detergent.** Use clean water to remove loosened material and soap before applying disinfectant.
4. **Apply disinfectant.** Follow the product label, keeping the required surfaces wet for the stated contact time. Rinse afterward if the instructions call for it.
5. **Dry and put away.** Leave the bucket to dry in a clean place. Store it separately from dirty containers, waste and chemical containers until it is needed.
6. **Get ready for flowers.** Before use, confirm that the bucket is clean and has no chemical residue. Fill it with fresh water and add flower food according to that product's directions.

Remove from service any bucket that cannot be cleaned completely. Deep scratches and cracks can be difficult to clean, while a damaged handle may make a full bucket unsafe to carry. Do not use flower buckets to hold pesticides, fuel or other chemicals.

Common questions about bucket reuse

Can I add fresh water to the water already in the bucket?

No. Empty and clean the bucket before filling it again. Adding water without emptying it leaves the old water and debris behind.

Will rinsing alone prepare a bucket for another delivery?

No. A rinse may wash away loose material, but it is not a substitute for scrubbing and disinfecting. Wash the bucket first, then apply disinfectant as its label directs.

May one brush be used on every bucket?

Yes, if the brush is kept clean and remains in good condition. Replace it if it is damaged or cannot be cleaned properly.

What should I do with a bucket that held chemicals?

Do not use it for flowers. Follow the chemical label and workplace procedures for handling the container, and choose a different bucket for floral use.

Also helpful: flowers as a business gift