

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

Bob Webster

Giving gifts of flowers and potted plants is an age-old custom that we enthusiastically continue today. For centuries, flowers, herbs and plants have been surrounded by their own unique myths, legends, and love. These are largely based on the floral traditions of the ancient Greek, Roman and Eastern cultures. It was the Victorians, however, who turned this into an art of communication and symbolism known as “the language of flowers”. Each flower was assigned a specific meaning or sentiment to be used as an unspoken communication between lovers and friends.

Here is a list of some of the most common gift plants and their traditional meanings:

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| Amaryllis | Pride, beauty |
| Begonia | Unrequited love— <i>“I want your attentions”</i> |
| Cactus | Warmth |
| Carnation (Dianthus) | Admiration, pure love |
| | Pink - Maternal love |
| | Red - Passionate love |
| | White - Living for love |
| Coreopsis | Cheerfulness |
| Chrysanthemum | Cheerfulness, optimism, joy, long life |
| Cyclamen | <i>“I understand you”</i> |
| Dusty Miller | Felicity, industriousness |
| Fern | Sincerity, fascination |
| Gerbera daisy | Friendship, purity |
| Geranium | Comfort, affection |
| | White - Gracefulness |
| | Scented - Gentility, preference |
| | Red - <i>“Your smile bewitches me”</i> |
| Ivy | Friendship, fidelity |
| Impatien | Ardent love, impatience |
| Hibiscus | Delicate beauty |
| Hyacinth | Sport, play |
| Kalanchoe | Popularity, favor |
| Lily | Beauty, purity |
| Orchid | Love, beauty, ecstasy, refinement, nobility, joy |
| Pansy | Loving thoughts, <i>“you occupy my thoughts”</i> |
| Passion Flower | Christian faith, religious superstition |
| Petunia | Never despair |
| Rose | Love, beauty, congratulations |
| | Red - Passions |
| | Pink - Grace, beauty |
| | White - Silence |
| | Yellow - Friendship, jealousy |
| | Coral - Admiration, beauty, charm |
| | Lavender - Rarity |
| Salvia, Red | Energy, forever thine |
| Tulip | Consuming love |
| Verbena | Faithfulness, marriage, fertility |
| Violet | Modesty, humility, <i>“I return your love”</i> |
| Zinnia | Thoughts of absent friends |

Bob Webster is the host of the KTSA Garden Show. He is the co-owner of Shades of Green Nursery, founded in 1981, and the Texas Orchid Company. He is a nationally recognized expert on orchids.