

Aerin Lauder LIVING WITH FLOWERS



The Language of Flowers

During the Victorian era strict rules of etiquette constrained courting couples from speaking freely about their emotions, so they often communicated through flowers. Learning the symbolism of flowers was all the rage in the 1800s, particularly after the 1819 publication of *Le Langage des Fleurs* by Charlotte de la Tour in France, one of the earliest books on the subject. Literary, mythological and folkloric associations were assigned to each flower, according to its color and characteristics. Red tulips, for example, meant a declaration of love, while bluebells expressed kindness. But flowers could have negative connotations as well: A yellow carnation sent back to a would-be suitor could signal disdain, while sending ivy meant only friendship was desired. Over time, many of the meanings have changed or been forgotten, but I think it's fun to consider the secret language of flowers when sending them as a gift. A dear friend sent me lilies of the valley with a note about their association with happiness, which I found so thoughtful. If you, too, would like to start speaking "the language of flowers," here is a glossary to get you started.



Amaryllis—pride, success, and creativity
Anemone—short-lived, these represent fragility
Aster—daintiness and charm; affection
Baby's breath—everlasting love
Bells of Ireland—good luck
Bird-of-paradise—freedom
Bluebells—kindness
Calla lily—beauty or rebirth and resurrection
Camellia: **pink**—I miss you; **white**—purity, innocence, or admiration and respect
Chrysanthemum—honesty, friendship
Cornflower or bachelor's button—a good luck charm linked to wealth and good fortune
Cosmos—order and harmony
Daffodil—new beginnings, friendship, forgiveness
Dahlia—dignity, or change
Daisy—innocence and loyalty
Delphinium: open-hearted, youth, and renewal
Freesia—friendship, innocence, and trust
Gardenia—secret love or simply to say “you’re lovely”
Geranium—true friendship
Gladiolus—integrity and strength, faithfulness and sincerity, generosity
Heather—good luck
Hibiscus—beauty
Holly—domestic happiness
Hollyhock—ambition
Hyacinth: **purple**—“Please forgive me”
Hydrangea—“Thank you for understanding”
Iris—royalty, wisdom, respect, or “I have a message for you”; **blue**—faith and hope
Ivy—friendship
Jasmine: **white**—sweet love, beauty, appreciation
Lavender—devotion

Lilac—love and passion
Lily: **white**—sympathy, but also purity and rebirth; **pink**—prosperity; **orange**—pride; **yellow**—gratitude
Lily of the valley—purity, return of happiness, luck, humility
Magnolia—love of nature
Marigold—passion and creativity
Mimosa—secret love
Morning glory—affection
Myrtle—good luck and love in marriage
Narcissus—“Stay as sweet as you are”
Olive branch—peace
Orchid—love, beauty, refinement, wisdom
Pansy—thoughtfulness and remembrance
Peony—bashfulness, or romance and a happy marriage
Poppy: **red**—remembrance
Ranunculus—radiant with charm
Rhododendron—danger
Rose: **pink**—grace, happiness, and gentleness; **white**—new beginnings, purity, and innocence; **red**—passion and romance
Rosemary—remembrance
Salvia: **blue**—thinking of you
Snapdragon—deception, or grace, strength, protection from evil
Stephanotis—marital bliss
Stock—lasting beauty, bonds of affection, a happy life
Sunflower—spirituality, good luck, and ambition
Sweet pea—blissful pleasure or goodbye
Tulip: **yellow**—sunshine; **pink**—caring, well wishes, happiness; **red**—declaration of love
Violet—loyalty, devotion, faithfulness, modesty
Zinnia—thinking of absent friends

