



## Highlights: Florists

Whether you want a dozen red roses to say, “I love you,” or stunning wedding centerpieces, you’ll want to find beautiful flowers at an affordable price. The new issue of **Washington Consumers’ Checkbook**, available at [www.checkbook.org](http://www.checkbook.org), rates local florists for price and quality and provides cost-saving alternatives and tips for buying flowers. Highlights from the article include:

- If you’re buying flowers for a wedding or other major occasion, or want them delivered, you’ll probably need to use a florist shop. But for flowers you’ll be picking up, Checkbook’s shoppers found that prices at supermarkets and warehouse clubs were, on average, 60 percent lower than those at florists. Prices at street vendors were lower than that: 70 percent lower than florists’.
- Also consider shopping at a wholesaler, where local florists buy their flowers. McCallum Sauber Wholesale in D.C., Middle Atlantic Wholesale in Alexandria, and Potomac Floral Wholesale in Silver Spring are all open to the public and offer tremendous variety and big savings.
- Among florist shops, Checkbook found big price differences. For one dozen long-stem red roses, prices ranged from \$34 to \$75, and for hydrangeas, prices ranged from \$2 to \$12 a stem.
- Checkbook’s surveys of consumers uncovered big differences in service among shops. For example, for the quality of advice provided, some shops were rated “superior” by fewer than 60 percent of their surveyed customers, while others got such favorable scores from 90 percent or more.
- **If you need flowers sent out of the area:**
  - Deal directly with a Washington-area florist you trust. That florist will contact a florist in the destination location to create and deliver an arrangement. Alternatively, find a well-regarded shop located where the recipient lives and call it to coordinate.
  - Be aware that many companies pose as local florists but are really order-taking services that often deliver big headaches.
  - When ordering flowers for delivery, pay by credit card. If you are unhappy with the service or the flowers, you can contest the charge with your credit card company.
- **Tips for choosing flowers:**
  - Look at the color, form, and trim of cut flowers. Avoid flowers that are wilted or bruised, have blemishes, or are losing petals.
  - Buds should be fairly tight, color should be vivid, and the base of the stem should be firm and neatly cut, free of dirt and slime.
  - If you’re buying from a street vendor, buy early in the day to increase the likelihood that the flowers haven’t been sitting in the sun too long. Also be sure water in the buckets is clear.
  - If you’re ordering by phone, clearly describe what you want—the size and shape, colors you want included, and an explanation of how you plan to use the arrangement.
  - If ordering for a large occasion, visit the shop. Ask for examples of work and for references.
- **Tips for keeping costs down:**
  - Flower prices are a product of supply and demand. You’ll pay extra to buy popular flowers at holiday times, so consider something less popular.
  - Buy stems and use a vase from home.
  - If possible, pick up flowers yourself, rather than having them delivered.

*The media may cite selected examples of top-rated florists, as shown in Washington Consumers’ Checkbook, and Checkbook’s editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or [jlettis@checkbook.org](mailto:jlettis@checkbook.org) to schedule.*