

Transporting Miniature Roses

Coolest idea for transporting miniature roses: floral foam (aka *Oasis*). Yes, the ubiquitous floral foam not only holds your arrangements securely, it also transports miniature roses like a charm!

Let us review the essential rules for using floral foam:

Let the block of dry foam sink on its own into a basin of water. It only takes a minute or two. Foam does not need to “soak overnight”. Wet is wet.

Never pour water over a dry block of foam to wet it. This can create deadly air pockets.

Cut all stems at a sharp angle, so they will enter the foam cleanly and wedge tightly.

Never pull a stem out “slightly” to reposition a rose – that creates a deadly air pocket.

Never try to re-wet foam that has been wet, and has then dried-out. You can keep wet, unused foam in a *zip-lock* plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Do not reuse floral foam. Used foam contains bacteria from previous stem tissue and, you guessed it, deadly air pockets.

Now, to transport minis prepare a hand-carry ice chest (for example, the *Igloo Playmate*) by chunking a block or two of wet foam into the bottom. If your cooler is short on headroom, you can slice the foam in half along the longest dimension to make two thinner slabs (each about 1-inch thick). The minis only need to be inserted about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch into the foam.

For a local show, blocks or slabs of foam can be fitted into an open, shallow container. (A square or rectangular container like a baking pan works best.)

If you are traveling far, you can freeze snack-size gel packs (*blue ice*) to snug around the foam. This provides cooling as well as wedging to keep the foam from shifting during transport. I like to pre-chill the wet blocks of floral foam in the refrigerator, but don't freeze it. I'll also pre-chill the inside of the ice chest with ice, or by setting it, open, in the refrigerator, if I have room.

As you harvest minis from the garden, re-cut the stems under water at a sharp angle so they will be ready to go on packing day. Miniatures, like the large roses, should first be fully hydrated by placing them for a few minutes into a container of warm water, then “hardened” in the refrigerator until packing day.

Note: during hydration in warm water, which only lasts a few minutes, rose foliage can be under water – right up to the neck of the bloom. But only an inch or so for water is needed for cold storage, to avoid bacterial decay, just as it is when you place roses in a vase for display.

On packing day, it only takes a few minutes to place the minis into the ice chest, as fast as you can stick'em. You should practice your technique: you might prefer to fit the foam block with minis and then lower it into the container, using a sling of freezer paper. Experiment.