

Orchids and roses can be sensible flowers for guests with pollen allergies because their pollen is less apt to become airborne than pollen from many trees and grasses. Still, no bloom is safe for everyone, so check with guests about their known sensitivities before selecting flowers.

How pollen gets into the air

Flowers produce pollen as part of reproduction, but different plants spread it in different ways. Many trees and grasses depend on wind, releasing light grains that can travel through the air. This airborne pollen commonly triggers seasonal symptoms such as sneezing, a runny nose and itchy eyes.

Many decorative flowers, by contrast, use insects to carry pollen between blooms. Their pollen is often heavier or tackier, so it is less likely to drift around an indoor space. That can reduce the amount guests breathe in, but it does not prevent every reaction. Someone sensitive to a flower may still react after touching it or holding it near their face.

Blooms that may be a good fit

Orchids are one option because their pollen is generally gathered into small, sticky packets instead of spreading as loose dust. A potted orchid can add a finished touch to a table without requiring a large arrangement. If scent might be a problem, select a variety without a noticeable fragrance.

Roses may also work well. Their pollen is fairly heavy, and the many petals on some roses can partly cover the flower’s center. Choose roses with a gentle scent, since people differ in what they enjoy and what bothers them.

These suggestions are not guarantees. A guest might be sensitive to a certain plant, to greenery included with the blooms, or to another substance in the room. If someone has reacted to a flower before, their own experience is a better guide than a general list of lower-risk choices.

Consider scent and placement

Some people find a powerful floral smell uncomfortable even when pollen is not the issue. Sensitivity to fragrance and pollen allergy are separate concerns, but either one can make time at an event unpleasant. Ask about both, and choose lightly scented or unscented flowers when you can.

Place arrangements away from meals and avoid putting flowers where seated guests will have them close to their faces. A side table can add color without placing blooms directly in front of each person. While arranging flowers indoors, handle them gently instead of shaking or brushing them, which could spread pollen.

Check first and have another option

Send guests a short note before the gathering and ask which flowers or scents they need to avoid. Take a named concern seriously. A flower should not be treated as safe for a particular person simply because it is often suggested for people with allergies.

If a guest has severe sensitivities, or you cannot find an option that suits them, leave fresh flowers out of shared areas. Artificial flowers can add color without flower pollen, provided they are clean and do not have dust built up on them.

A considerate display is one guests can be comfortable near. Asking ahead and choosing a suitable location can help everyone enjoy the gathering.

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