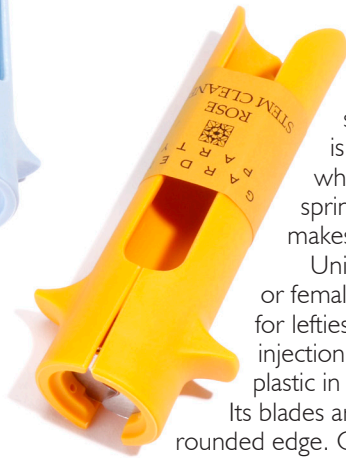


Made in the U.S.A.:

ROSE STEM CLEANERS

An innovative tool created by an industrial designer for his florist spouse.



about 6 inches long and 1.5-inches in diameter, the stem cleaner is comprised of two parts of a plastic cylinder so that the florist's hand is completely protected when using it. There's a spring-loaded hinge that makes using the tool a cinch.

Universally sized for male or female hands, it also works for lefties. The handle is made of injection-molded, fiber-reinforced plastic in blue, orange and green.

Its blades are honed metal with a rounded edge. Gavin sources all of the materials domestically and contracts with a woman-owned Washington state company to mold the plastic parts. Assembly takes place on Bainbridge Island, under the same roof as Garden Party Flowers.

"I've used a lot of roses for weddings, and I've noticed that the older metal strippers rip the cane as they take the thorns," TJ explains. "Gavin's design doesn't. He made the blade part so that it would knock the thorns off but it doesn't rip the cane all the way down. Otherwise, anytime you rip the cane of a rose, it reduces the life of that flower."

The Rose Stem Cleaner is available through various online stores and floral wholesalers, ranging in price from about \$12 retail with several sellers offering volume wholesale discounts (see right).

When mothers-of-the-bride beg TJ for a tool of their own, she sends them to **Ama-**

zon, where the tool is sold for under \$20. **Wildflower Seed & Garden Tool Co., Kinsman Garden Company, Jackson & Perkins** and other garden tool suppliers also stock Stem Cleaners for retail customers.

Using the tool is second nature for TJ, a popular Seattle wedding florist who harvests from her organic garden on Bainbridge Island for seasonal flowers, herbs and foliage. "Florists love to tell me what they use the tool for – from stripping snapdragons to eucalyptus and Christmas greens," she says. "Everyone has a story about what they use the stem cleaner for besides roses."

DETAILS:

Garden Party Rose Stem Cleaner

Wholesale Sources: floralsupplier.com, dorothybiddle.com

Garden Party Flowers: gardenpartyflowers.com ■

Before launching **Garden Party Flowers**, her Bainbridge Island, Wash.-based wedding and event floral studio, **TJ Montague** freelanced for other florists. One busy Valentine's weekend, she came home from working at a retail flower shop and her husband **Gavin Groves** couldn't understand why her hands looked so bloody. "I asked, 'What have you been doing?'" he recalls. "She explained to me that she had been stripping roses." The C-shaped metal claw in use at the time did nothing to protect TJ's hands from thorns nor was it gentle on rose canes.

Gavin, an industrial designer, thought of something to improve on the old metal stripper. "I didn't know much about the floral industry, but I thought I could help florists solve a problem," he says. "I made a few prototypes, and we showed them to our florists friends, and they just loved the idea."

Florist-inspired and engineered by a seasoned industrial designer, the **Garden Party Rose Stem Cleaner** hit the market about 20 years ago. Today, hundreds of thousands of units later, the lightweight, colorful tool is a favorite of florists and gardeners. Measuring

