

Scientists to perfect the perfect rose

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David Murdock, owner of the Dole Food Co. -- North America's largest marketer and importer of cut flowers -- is seeking the "perfect" rose.

Dole is giving North Carolina State University \$1.4 million for a three-year study to genetically engineer a red rose that lives longer than current varieties, contains fewer thorns and produces a better aroma, the Charlotte (N.C.) Observer reported Tuesday.

The research is to begin next month in Raleigh and then expand to Kannapolis, N.C., where Dole is building a \$1 billion biotechnology facility.

The researchers will examine how roses are cut, shipped and handled and the water in which they are shipped in an effort to extend vase life from the current seven to 10 days to as long as three to four weeks, the

newspaper reported.

Dole's Fresh Flowers division, based in Miami, accounted for 4 percent of the company's \$5.3 billion 2004 in revenues. Its line of fresh flowers has more than 800 varieties, and its rose plantations produce more than 250 million stems annually.

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