

# Garden Mums



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Garden mums, originally from the Orient, are now grown all over the world for their wonderful display of colorful blooms.

## About Mums

Mums provide glorious color for the seasonal garden throughout the autumn. They are available in a wide range of colors with many variations within each hue. And, if the colors weren't enough to choose from, the flowers come in several different shapes and sizes. Because mums come in early, mid and late season bloom times you can have an outstanding array of colors and textures from late August into November. In addition, mums are long lasting cut flowers and can be made into simple bouquets or added to more formal arrangements. Generally, each mum will bloom for 3-5 weeks depending on weather.

## Planting

Plant mums in late summer and throughout the fall when the selection is at its best. Choose a sunny location with adequate drainage — mums will not tolerate "wet feet." Plant them carefully — remove them from their pots and gently score (or rake) the rootballs to free the roots. Place them carefully in the ground, taking care to plant them no deeper than they were in their pots. Mums have surface roots and will suffocate if planted too deeply. Water with a transplant fertilizer to stimulate root growth.

## To Keep or Not To Keep?

Most gardeners today suffer from a lack of space and dispose of garden mums once they have passed their peak bloom as mums are not reliably hardy in our area. However, if you have plenty of space you might try to over-winter your mums. You can always move them in the spring if they are taking up a prime color location. Garden mums will be content to pass the summer in a large vegetable garden or any sunny spot out of the way.

## Over-Wintering

After they bloom, remove the faded blooms, but don't cut the stems back. Do not try to move them now, even if you don't want them to stay where they are through the next growing season. Well-draining soil is the key to successfully over-wintering mums. In many cases it is not the cold that kills mums, but the ice that may form around the roots if they are planted in an area that collects water. Repeated freezing and thawing of the soil can heave plants out of the ground, exposing their roots to the

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elements. Newly transplanted plants are especially vulnerable to heaving. Apply a layer of straw, pine boughs or springy material over established plants which will help to minimize this problem. After the foliage of the plant has died back you will need to cut the stems to 3-4 inches above the ground. Leaving some of the stems will ensure you have a full plant next spring as new stems will grow from these trimmed ones. Finally, apply a layer of mulch after ground has frozen. This will help to keep the ground insulated. Good luck!

## Spring Care

If growth resumes in the spring, carefully clear away the mulch and remove any dead foliage. Now is the time to move them to their summer home, if necessary. Replant the clumps in good quality soil that drains well - this is essential for healthy mums. We recommend a dose of transplant fertilizer to stimulate root growth. When plants reach 8-10" in height pinch them halfway back to shape and encourage more blooms in the fall. Continue to pinch as needed until the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. At that point it is time to let your plant finish growing on its own.

## Fertilizing

Mums, being surface feeders, appreciate fertilizer applied as a top dressing. About the end of May, scratch a granular fertilizer for flowering plants (such as GardenTone) into the soil around each plant. Apply granular plant food every four or five weeks till August or supplement with water-soluble fertilizer throughout the late spring and early summer to encourage branching and bud formation.

## What's in a Flower?

Mum flowers grow in a variety of shapes. Combine and contrast different varieties to add zest to your garden.



**Anemone** - A row of elongated, oval-shaped petals surrounding an outstanding, sometimes contrasting, fluffy central eye.



**Daisy** - A single or semi-double row of elongated or oval-shaped petals surrounding a central eye.



**Decorative** - The traditional look. Multiple layers of long, strap-like petals form a full flower without a noticeable central eye.



**Pompon** - Multiple layers of petals form a smaller rounded flower without a noticeable central eye.



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