



## **Tips on the Successful Culture of Garden Mums**

Garden chrysanthemums are an attractive addition to any planting and extend the flowering season well into late fall. There are many types of garden mums, from large-flowered decoratives to daisy and spider mums, pom poms, spoons, and button mums. Flowering time varies from variety to variety; some mums bloom in late August, others in September, and still others in October. Weather conditions, such as heat delay from an exceptionally hot summer, can also affect blooming time.

Garden mums that are available in bloom during the spring have been “forced” into bloom for the convenience of the customer. They will bloom again at their proper time in the fall, but only this year. Once planted in your flowerbed, they will bloom only in the fall in subsequent years. Plant them slightly deeper than the soil level in the pot. Water thoroughly and generously. Applications of a mild, liquid fertilizer solution will encourage active root growth and will help to establish the plant. If the weather remains dry, these plants should be kept watered for several weeks. However, it is important to keep the ground from getting waterlogged. To keep your plants fat and bushy (instead of tall and scraggily), pinch them back towards the end of May and again before the first week in July.

The mortality rate of fall mums can be high, especially in Zone 5. Except for dendranthemums (a shrub-like precursor of today’s cushion mums), fall mums should be considered annuals. To improve your chances of wintering them over, follow these steps:

- Plant your fall mums as soon as possible, so they will have plenty of time to establish a strong root system before winter. Planting them after the flowers have died does not give your plants time to establish a good root system.
- Make sure that your plant does not go into winter with either dry soil or waterlogged soil. If we have a very dry autumn, it may be necessary to water your plants in early winter.
- After the first hard freeze, DO NOT immediately cut off the tops of the plant. Allow the branches of the plant to dry up on their own. It is important to allow the plant to store nutrients from the frozen stems into the root ball. Do not cut back these tops until mid-December when the ground begins to freeze. Then cut back the tops and lay them on the plant for winter protection.
- You may want to add a light mulch of straw to help protect the plants. We do not advocate the use of leaves, as they have a tendency to pack and smother the plants.
- Uncover the plants in early spring and follow the instructions in paragraph two above.