

Keeping Potted Mums

Watering: For potted mums, check the mums' soil moisture daily and water the mums when the top 1 inch of soil begins to dry. Keep soil moist, but not wet. Water until it begins to drain from the bottom of the pot and empty the water collected in the pot's drip tray. If plants dry out, submerge in a bucket of water, or poke a sharp pencil into the soil several times, and then water.

Pruning: Removing spent blooms encourages further blooming and keeps the plants clean. Cut back the foliage after it dies naturally in fall.

Keeping Indoors: Potted mums can comfortably live outdoors throughout the fall, but once temps dip down near freezing (32 degrees or cooler), pull them indoors. Set indoor mums near a window that receives bright, indirect sunlight all day. Mums prefer temperatures near 70 to 75 degrees.



Planting Mum Gardens

Sun: Mums prefer **six hours of sun** a day. Plants that don't get enough sunlight will be tall and leggy and produce fewer, smaller flowers.

Spacing: Young plants in small containers should be planted 18-24 inches apart. Mature plants can be planted at any desired spacing provided they are planted no closer than just touching their neighbor. Fall mums need to be planted in the ground **BEFORE** the first hard frost.

Soil: Mums thrive in well-drained soil. If your soil is heavy clay, grow mums in raised beds with crumbly cake-like soil for good root growth. If the soil is too dense, add compost and prepare to a depth of 8-12 inches for best performance. Mums' roots are shallow, and can easily get crowded out by other plants. Plant mums about 1 inch deeper than they were in the original pot, being careful with the roots as you spread them.

Watering: Water newly planted mums thoroughly and never let them wilt. Check your mums every other day for watering until you become familiar with their needs, particularly during dry spells. Remember to water the soil, not the blooms. When bottom leaves

look limp or start to turn brown, water more often. Avoid soaking the foliage, which encourages disease.

Fertilizer: Mums planted in fall as annuals, do not need fertilizer. Mums you hope to overwinter should get high-phosphorus fertilizer to stimulate root growth. Mums planted in spring should get a 5-10-10 fertilizer once or twice a month until cooler weather sets in.

Pinching: If you've bought large, full plants in the fall, they have already been pinched and are ready for planting.

In the spring, plants will need pinching for maximum bloom and best plant shape. Start pinching as soon as you see a good flush of buds. Pinch about half of the tender new growth at the top of the shoot, choosing some stems with buds and some without. Repeat the process with every 3 to 5 inches of growth (about every two to four weeks) until late June/early July. Stopping then ensures you will get good bud formation and blooms in fall.

Pests: You may notice aphids, leafhoppers, or spider mites, but they are not likely to harm the plant.

Making an Impact!

When planting mums together you can create a carpet of fall color. The greatest visual impact can be achieved with just one or two colors. You can also create an "ombre" effect by transitioning related colors from one end of your garden to the other.

Garden mums also make great container plants. They're just right for popping into a decorative fall pot, lining up in a row in a window box, or placing in the center of a mixed container with trailing foliage plants all around.

Annual or Perennial?

Mums can return the following year under the right conditions. Fall planting lessens the chance of winter survival since roots don't have time to establish themselves. If you want something more permanent and are willing to provide proper care such as mulching and pinching to encourage compact growth and more blooms, plant mums in the spring and allow them to get established in the garden. This will improve their chances of overwintering and reblooming the next year. Some plants will even produce a few blooms in the spring before being pinched for fall flowers.

Florist Mum or Hardy Mum?

Florist (or cutting) mums are large flower plants with many possible bloom forms. They are grown in greenhouses and are used only as indoor plants. Florist mums produce few, if any, underground stolons (stems that grow at the soil surface), which are necessary if the mum is to survive cold weather. You can plant a potted florist mum outdoors, and it may grow for the summer, but once the blooms are spent it will not survive the winter, no matter how much protection you give it.

Kalamazoo Flower Group ships **Hardy** (or Garden) mums, which do produce underground stolons and can survive the cold better. Most garden mums are perennials in Zones 5 to 9 and are much tougher than florist types. Some cultivars are less hardy than others and can be killed by an early spring frost.



Provided by:

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Fall Mum Guide

A Basic Guide for the Beginning Home Gardener

This low maintenance, drought resistant, fall favorite is perfect for a pop of color in fall gardens, decks and patios!!