

BEAUTIFUL SPACES FOR
A BETTER LIFE

At Home

FALL FLOWERS

Long-Lost Mums

On a farm tucked in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, a mother-daughter team is making life brighter with heirloom varieties

BY ANNA MITCHAE



All in the Family
Stephanie Duncan (left) and Jessica Hall (right) grow flowers with their mom, Chris Auville.

Many of us think we know chrysanthemums. We see them at the grocery store and can appreciate how the blossoms may be accented with ribbons or trinkets for the homecoming game. But Jessica Hall, head grower at Harmony Harvest Farm in Weyers Cave, Virginia, wants us to know that's just the tip of the bud. Hall, her mother (Chris Auville), and her sister (Stephanie Duncan) are the brains and brawn behind their family floral business, which is on a lively mission to bring back lost varieties of the heirlooms. "People are shocked when they find out that these gorgeous flowers are mums," Hall says. This surprise goes beyond the kaleidoscope of colors and bloom shapes. When those who have signed up for the farm's annual waiting list receive their Mum Garden Boxes of bare-root plants for their own yards, they also realize that the flowers are easy to grow. Each package includes a selection of cultivars so recipients can experiment in their region and see what strikes their fancy. And for those who don't want to garden but would still like a feast for the eyes, Harmony Harvest has a robust offering of cut blooms that they ship. This all points to the primary reason the family started growing them in the first place. As Hall explains, "We just want to make the world better through flowers."

Heirloom Blooms

Mums can keep a grower occupied year-round. When their shimmering flowers are done, help them overwinter and watch them flourish the next season. Then you can take cuttings and make more plants. If stems are picked while blooming, their vase life is about two weeks—but it can sometimes stretch even longer.



'Moirá'

The moody flower can skew toward lavender or gray, sometimes turning the color of red wine.



'Primrose Tennis'

When this bright chrysanthemum is in full form, it resembles its namesake ball shape.



'Apricot Courtier'

Warm orange petals are a bright spot on a traditional fall color palette. In full bloom, the cushion is large and lush.



'River City'

Featuring narrow, salmon-colored petals that curl, this mum benefits from being pruned lightly.