

Care and Planting of Chrysanthemums

Mums are a great way to add a little color to your fall garden. They are photo-tropic, which means that day length directly impacts their life cycle. As the days get shorter in the fall, the mums will start to produce more flowers.

Planting: Mums prefer to be planted deeply into the ground in a sunny area with nutrient-rich soil. While they prefer to be grown in the sun, if they are purchased already bearing buds or flowers, they may tolerate some shade or being indoors. If your soil is poor, it is best to amend it with a soil high in nutrients, such as Penobscot. It will also benefit your plants to fertilize using an all-purpose fertilizer such as Neptune's Harvest. Mums should be fertilized once a month until buds form, as well as at the time of planting. You should then hold off on fertilizing until next year.

Care: Little maintenance is necessary after initial planting. Soil should be well watered when dry. Mums that are left in pots will become dry quicker than those that are planted, and should be checked often for watering. Pinching and deadheading is only necessary until the end of summer; this is when the plant's growth will slow and it will put its energy into producing flower buds.

Winter Protection: Mums are not always hardy in northern states, and many people plant them as annuals. When doing so, it's fine to leave them in containers. If you'd like to try and over-winter them, it is best to plant as soon as possible in the fall in order to give the plants time to become well-rooted. Mums that are planted in the spring are usually more winter hardy, as they have had a longer time to establish. It is not necessary to remove the dead plant in late fall, but there are a few other things that can be done to help with the over-wintering process. It is best to mound soil over the plant after the foliage has died, let the mound freeze, and then cover with straw or evergreen branches. This cover will work to keep the root system insulated. The cover should be removed as soon as the ground thaws (usually around early March). While these steps are the best way to protect your mums from harsh winters, they may still suffer from winter kill.

