



Guide to Garden Mums

At Andy's Garden, we offer the majority of our garden mum selection in late summer through fall. Mums are late season bloomers and therefore a centerpiece of the fall season décor.

The big question always is, “Are they hardy?” Technically yes, *Chrysanthemum morifolium* is a hardy perennial in climate zones 5-9. What we offer are hybrid varieties. They are the result of endless crosses of varieties grown mainly for their form and color and not necessarily for winter hardiness. The way mums can be used for fall décor may not allow them to grow successfully in the late season garden to survive the winter. **For example**, if you keep them in the grower pots or in decorative pots on the deck or patio until late fall, then decide to plant them in the ground, they have not had enough time to root into the surrounding soil before winter weather sets in. Mums have a shallow root system, so the freezing and thawing winter weather can heave newly planted mums from the ground. They need at least 6 weeks of grow time before winter, so the roots can grow into the surrounding soil and have a better chance of survival.



Planting Garden Mums (*Chrysanthemum*)

Planting garden mums as perennials in spring or fall, will need to be planted in full sun (6 hours per day) with fertile, well-drained soil. The planting site should be protected from strong winter winds. A south west exposure is usually too brutal for mum growing, unless there is protective buildings or evergreen shrubbery close by. Keep them well watered. Mums appreciate consistent moisture levels, but not standing water. A fertilizer with a high middle number for phosphorus can be used at planting time to help stimulate root growth.

After a hard frost, apply a mulch around the base of mum plants. Leave the dying foliage intact until spring. It helps protect the plants. The mulch material can be straw, evergreen clippings or hardwood mulch. When spring arrives, gradually remove the mulch covering, so the new growth isn't smothered when the weather warms up. Clip off the old stems.

Although garden mums can also be called hardy mums, winter survival is not guaranteed. Using mums as annuals for fall coloring is a good option too!

Whichever you decide is the best decorative use for your mum purchase, here are some tips to keep them looking nice:

- Bright light or full sun – too much shade will give you leggy plants with fewer blooms.
- Keep well watered. Never let them wilt.
- Clip out spent blooms so new ones have the sunlight to bloom as well.

Note: Florist mums, generally offered at Easter time are not hardy and are meant to be used as cuttings for floral arrangements or just to enjoy a potted mum as a gift plant.