

How to Grow and Care for Mums

Garden Mums (short for Chrysanthemum) are plants that happen to be perennial in zones 6 and higher. Mums may be used in beds, borders, and containers. They come in array of colors from bright yellows to reds and pinks. They usually bloom in late summer/fall and again in spring if they have wintered over. Mums are great planted with other cool weather loving plants such as Dianthus, Alyssum, and Dusty Miller and are great with ornamental grasses. Bloom cycles typically last 30-45 days. Mums tend to have a mounding growth habit and depending on the variety may spread to 24"-30" in the ground.

When planting in the ground, proper preparation of the soil goes a long way in getting the most from your mums. Work in organic material such as compost, peat moss, or decomposed leaves to a 4" depth before planting. This accommodates the plant's need for well-draining soil and provides nutrients as the organic material decomposes.

When growing mums in well-prepared soil, the need for fertilization will be minimal. Mums also prefer acidic soil, so do not add limestone unless indicated by a soil test. If you do fertilize, choose a well-balanced granular or liquid fertilizer proportionally higher in the middle number, such as Vigoro or Miracle Grow's 10-20-10 formula or similar. As a rule, liquid fertilizers tend to be more beneficial when ground temperatures are below 45 degrees, allowing the fertilizer to be more readily available to your mums. Always follow the proper application instructions on your fertilizer package.

Keep your mums properly watered, not overwatered, not dry enough to wilt, for great color all season.