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# How to Grow Chrysanthemums: The Complete Chrysanthemum Flower Guide



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# Planting, Growing, and Caring for Chrysanthemums

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: September 25, 2024



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The Chrysanthemum, aka “mums,” is the quintessential autumn flower. How do you care for your mums so that they come back year after year? How do you keep them blooming, and what do you do to overwinter mums? See our complete guide on growing mums.

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of the Fall Flowers, celebrating the season  
in jewel colors: yellow, lavender, pink,  
purple, red, bronze, orange, and white.

Each bloom consists of tiny flowers called  
florets. Bloom forms range in size from  
pincushion petite to giant spiders, and  
there are hundreds from which to choose.

Mums generally grow to a width and  
height of 3 feet tall if they are pinched  
regularly during the growing season.

Bloom time is determined by day length  
(12 hours or less!), and buds start forming  
then. Mums spread quickly if properly  
planted and spaced.

## Are Mums Perennial or Annual?

Mums are **hardy perennials** best planted  
in early spring. However, those pretty  
mums sold in garden centers as fall deco-  
rations are often best treated as annuals;  
do not try to overwinter them, as they  
weren't bred to be hardy.

Yes, if you plant a cold-hardy perennial that's marked to withstand low temperatures, it will come back every year. Early spring is the best time to order and plant mums to give them time to grow strong roots, become well-established before winter, and grow into a more robust, full plant.

Southerners can enjoy the colorful displays of blooming mums twice yearly because the equal days and nights of temperature weather that cause mums to bloom happen in both the spring and the fall. Northerners must be satisfied with one show in autumn.



Mums growing outdoors in Ohio.

Credit: Catherine Boeckmann

#### Read Next

- [Are Mums Perennials? Which Mums Come Back Year After Year](#)
- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)
- [50 Fall Flowers and Plants for Autumn!](#)

## PLANTING

Select a planting site in full sun, away from trees and big shrubs. Mums require rich, well-draining soil. They do not like standing water and will quickly rot if left too wet. Prepare by adding aged manure or compost to the soil (mums are heavy feeders).

**Container Tip:** Many folks will set their potted mums on or near their porches.

bud! If you're wondering why your mum isn't blooming, it's often due to this reason (as well as lack of sun or water).

## When to Plant Mums

- Mums are hardy perennials best planted in early spring.
- Start mums indoors from seed 6 to 8 weeks before the last spring frost date.

## How to Plant Mums

- Set mums 18 to 36 inches apart, depending on their expected size at maturity.
- Mums need good air circulation.
- Plant mums in the ground at the same depth that it was grown at in the pot. Water can gather around the base and rot the stems if planted too low.



- If you are growing mums in pots, they will be dry in no time, and you must keep them moist; when you water, it should drain out the bottom. (If you buy mums in wrapped containers, make sure they have drainage holes!)

## GROWING

- Watering mums is vital to success; too little water slows or stops their growth! Keep mums moist. Soak the soil deeply when watering. Avoid watering the leaves.
- Mums are heavy feeders. A monthly application of a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) is good practice.
- Spread mulch around the mum to conserve soil moisture and to keep weeds out.
- Pinch back stems to create a bushier plant: When new shoots are 3 to 4 inches tall, pinch off the top, leaving 2 to 3 leaves on the shoot. Continue pinching every 2 to 3 weeks until mid-July, when buds develop. On the West

- Stop fertilizing when flower buds emerge.
- For big flowers, pinch off all buds except the largest and strongest on each stem. Remove secondary buds farther down the stem as they develop, too.
- Switch to a high-nitrogen fertilizer after the buds have set. If flower size does not matter, stop fertilizing in mid-August.
- After the ground has frozen, spread 4 to 6 inches of mulch around the plant.
- Do not cut back mums in the fall. The dead growth insulates the roots. Cut off the dead stems and leaves when you see the first green shoots in spring.



USDA Hardiness Zones 5 and warmer, perennial chrysanthemums can be kept outdoors (in the ground) through the winter. But in extremely cold areas, over- winter plants in a basement or dark, cold closet. Pot up plants after the first frost in the fall, capturing as many of the roots as possible. Leave the foliage on the plants until spring.

Water well and keep the roots damp. Check pots weekly. In spring, gradually introduce the plants to light. Set them out after the last killing frost.

## Dividing Mums

Every 2 to 3 years, divide mums when new growth appears in the spring. Use a knife to cut out the old central portion of the plant. Discard it. Cut the remaining portion into sections. Each section should have several shoots and good roots. Replant these sections.

## Types

**Mums belong to one of 13 classes based on flower form and petal shape!**

1. Irregular Incurve: giant blooms, e.g.,  
‘Bola de Oro’ (gold)
2. Reflect: very large to medium  
blooms, e.g., ‘Pretty Polly’ (purple,  
with pink reverses)
3. Regular Incurve: ball-shape, e.g.,  
‘George Couchman’ (bronze)
4. Decorative: flattened, e.g., ‘Coral  
Charm’ (salmon)
5. Intermediate Incurve: more open  
than other incurves, e.g., ‘St. Tropez’  
(crimson, with bronze reverse)
6. Pompom: balls, e.g., ‘Kevin Mandarin’  
(deep orange)

8. Anemone: single, e.g., 'Daybreak'  
(apricot, with yellow center)
9. Spoon: single/daisy with tipped  
ends, e.g., 'Kimie' (yellow, with  
green center)
10. Quill: tubular florets, e.g., 'King's  
Delight' (true pink)
11. Spider: varying florets, e.g., 'Lava'  
(yellow, with red tips)
12. Brush or Thistle: upright florets, e.g.,  
'Wisp of Pink' (yellow center)
13. Unclassified or Exotic: irregular, e.g.,  
'Lone Star' (pure white)

## Extra-hardy Mums

These will survive in frigid climates: 'Betty Lou' Maxi Mum, 'Burnt Copper', 'Centerpiece', 'Grape Glow', 'Lemonsota', 'Maroon Pride', 'Mellow Moon', 'Minnautumn', 'Minnpink', 'Minnruby', 'Minnwhite', 'Minnyellow', 'Rose Blush', 'Sesqui Centennial Sun', 'Snowscape'.



Pink Spider Chrysanthemum.  
Credit: EdenGardenGr.

## HARVESTING

Cut chrysanthemum flowers for arrangements when they are nearly or fully open.

Remove lower leaves that would be in the water. Leaves submerged in water will rot.

Change the water in the vase every couple of days. Vase life is 7 to 10 days.



## GARDENING PRODUCTS





## PESTS/DISEASES

Diseases: Aster yellows, Ascochyta ray, crown gall, leaf spot, powdery mildew, Pythium root, and stem; Rhizoctonia root and stem, Fusarium wilt, Verticillium root

Pests: Mums are susceptible to aphids, fo-  
liar nematodes, and spider mites.

## WIT AND WISDOM

- The chrysanthemum was a culinary flowering herb in the 15th century B.C. China. It was a healing herb said to have the power of life, healing headaches, and other maladies. The earliest illustrations show mums as small, yellow, daisy-like flowers.
- The word “chrysanthemum” comes from the Greek words *chrys*, meaning “golden,” and *anthemion*, meaning

though mums now come in

many colors.

- It's said that a single petal placed in the bottom of a glass of wine enhances longevity.
- The mum is November's birth flower!

## FLOWERS

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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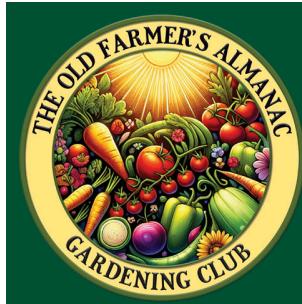
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## COMMENTS

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**Bipul Kumar Sr... (not verified)** 3 months 3

weeks ago

Good content. Thanks, you. Just want to know about keeping the post or plant after Autumn season. Can you advice when and how to propagate for the next season. How to preserve planting material during cooling period i.e. after February or March in India. I will be highly obliged if share information at my email

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[REPLY](#)

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**FRANK AKERS (not verified)** 1 year 5 months

ago

This is a great beginners primer for the beginner grower & cultivationist; well worth keeping to refer to revisit as a reference...WELL DONE!!!

[REPLY](#)

**Jennifer Keating** 1 year 5 months

ago

Thank you, Frank!

**REPLY**

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**Nicole (not verified)** 1 year 10 months ago

My plants are from fall 2022. I planted them, they started to flowered this spring and are still flowering. My question is can I relocate them now. I think I can cause I planted them from pot to ground while blooming.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 10 months ago

When it comes to transplanting your mums from one garden area to another, it would be best to wait until after the plant has stopped blooming later in the season or wait until next spring. You will want to make sure that your mums have time to estab-

spring, it is also a great time to not only move your plants, but also divide them. Dig up the plants in early spring just as new growth appears.

Divide each plant into sections with a sharp knife. Each smaller plant should contain several shoots and a portion of the root system. Replant the divisions as soon as possible.

**REPLY**

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**Melissa (not verified)** 2 years ago

I want to plant some around my garden. During the spring my yard is very wet. We have to wear boots around our yard because of all the standing water. Our garden is at the highest point in our yard and I plan to build up the area around our garden fence to plant them. Will this work? Will they survive? The rest of the year our yard is fine, it's just spring when everything is swampy.

**REPLY**

Anything that you can do to provide good drainage will help chrysanthemums to survive. Some root rot diseases will spread by splashing water, so try to have your mums away from puddles if you can. Building up the soil in the area where you'd like to plant can definitely help. Or, you might plant them in containers or raised beds, to get them off any saturated ground. Improving soil drainage by mixing in lots of organic matter might help as well. Also provide good air circulation (such as not too close to other plants, plant in a sunny spot), to help dry leaves during the day and deter disease. Hope this helps!

**REPLY**

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**jlbs (not verified)** 2 years 5 months ago

I was given a potted mum five years ago and have kept it blooming every year by "winterizing" it. I cover it with the cut dried up flowers and stems of the plant, add some leaves, cover

able to divide the plant into three and all three did well. I'm in zone 5, and some of our winters are brutal with cold and wind. This winter is forecast to be even worse, so time will tell how my mums survive it.

**REPLY**

---

**Mike (not verified)** 3 years 7 months ago

Potted mums purchased in autumn will often overwinter with little effort, at least mine do. I do repot them when I bring them home, however. Most people leave them in their plastic tubs and simply dispose of them after bloom. I look forward to a few hours in the cool garage in fall, potting up the new mums - there's always a new color that catches my eye, too.

Standard, inexpensive potting soil, no need for fertilizer. I only buy mums that are just starting to bloom or have only buds - obviously, they last longer. When they are done blooming and repeated nightly frosts are likely, I take them into the garage: detached, unheated. I let the greenery fade a little, then I cut them down.

There is always new green hidden at the base

may try that on a few as an experiment this year, but previously I have not watered or left green. In spring, around mid-April, I just set them outside, give them a drink and wait. Within 2 weeks they are greening up again. Once in a while one might not return, but usually they all do if they are a single season old. I've had many, many that return for a third year! I know this is not supposed to happen, but it does! Now, they take all summer to keep growing and get buds. Mine from last year are just starting to flower now - some need another couple weeks. They usually double in size, too. It's fun remembering the colors I have as they open. A few big pots of greenery all summer are nice to place strategically around and I also like to keep a big grouping of them all together in another area, then bring them out front as they flower. Of course this will tie up your pots for a couple years but I have plenty of pots now. I still buy new mums yearly to replace the ones that won't make after a second or third bloom, so the pots get rotated. Give it a try, even with a few, just to see what happens!

**REPLY**

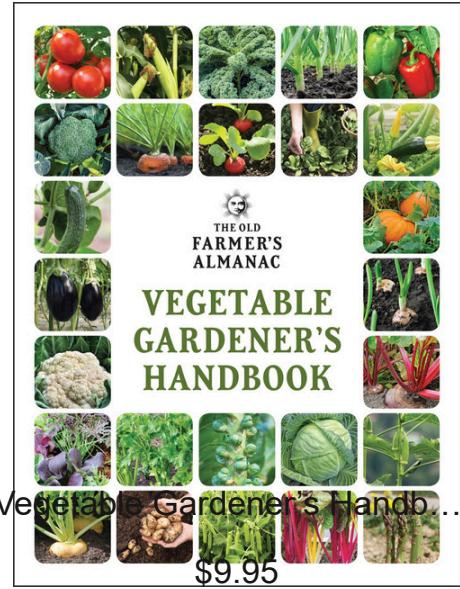
**Judy from Michigan (not verified)** 1 year 10 months ago

Mike, thank you for your advice! I will certainly try your method. Can you share what area of the country you are in please?

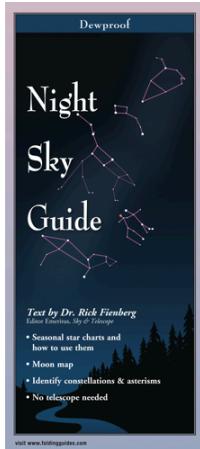
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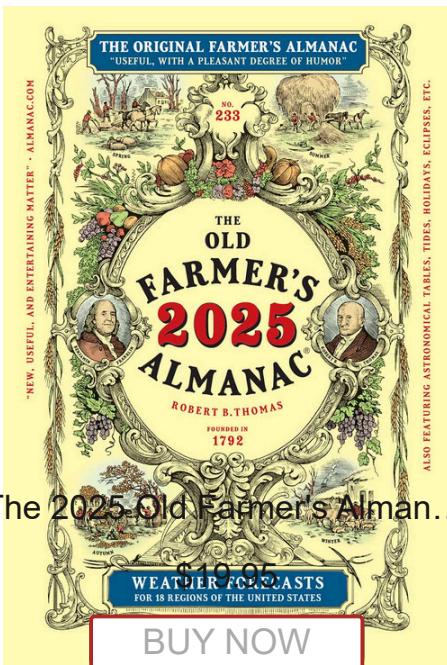
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