

HARDY CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Be sure to buy the hardy variety mums such as those available at Green View. Not all chrysanthemum varieties such as those sometimes sold as floral gifts, are hardy in Illinois winters. Your soil type and how well it drains determine ultimate hardiness. Follow the instructions below to increase the hardiness of your mums.

Requirements

Excellent drainage is a must for healthy mums that will survive the winter. Avoid heavy clay-type soils. To improve drainage, plant in raised beds and amend with ample organic matter.

Rich, fertile soil high in organic matter such as mushroom compost, sphagnum peat moss, or Plant One Mix.

Full sun or very light shade.

Planting (Spring or Fall)

Select varieties, which are hardy. By careful selection of early, mid and late season varieties, you can increase the period of bloom time to several months of colorful fall bloom.

Prepare bed with organic matter to increase fertility and improve drainage.

Plant slightly high - (plant ball an inch or two higher than the soil level) to improve drainage. Space plants 18-24" apart.

Mulch with an organic mulch such as shredded hardwood bark, cypress bark, or cocoa hulls 2-3" thick.

Water with a starter fertilizer such as *Fertilome Root Stimulator*.

Care and Maintenance

Prune or pinch for bushy plants and maximum bloom. Failing to pinch plants may result in tall leggy plants that can easily be damaged in the wind, and fewer blooms. "Pinch back" 2 or 3 times during the growing season. The first pinch (snap off with fingers or cut off with shears) should be when the plant is 6-8" tall. Pinch about half the growth off at this time. When the branching (which appears after the first pinching) reaches 6-8", again pinch off about half of the new growth. Fast growing, vigorous varieties may require a third pinch. To insure proper flower bud development, do not pinch any later than July 10.

Water at all stages of mum growth; mums do not withstand drought well and flowering will be affected.

Fertilize every two weeks with a fertilizer high in phosphorous such as Fertilome Root-N-Bloom.

Winterize mums by keeping an organic mulch layer 2-3" thick and leaving the foliage growth on the plants through the winter. Cut off old foliage in the spring just before the new growth emerges.

HARDY ASTERS

To add a different palate of colors to your fall landscape, asters may be used. They add a spectrum of blues and lavenders not usually seen in mums, plus raspberries and whites. They are more winter hardy than mums, drought tolerant, attract butterflies, are a good cut flower, and combine well with plants such as goldenrod, dark-leaved sedums, and Russian sage.

The culture of asters is very similar to that of mums, including the benefits of pinching.

