

Chrysanthemum

Over the weekend I have visited one of our local garden centers and could not resist seeing the colorful containers with chrysanthemum (Mums). Seeing these mums caused me to realize that fall has arrived. I truly believe mums are one of the most versatile fall blooming plants; they can be placed just about anywhere. They can add color inside your home, on the patio, in planters, in window boxes or even in your general landscape. Please don't forget to use mums as a center piece for your thanksgiving dinner! Mums are perennial, they grow throughout the year. A few will bloom in spring, but their best show is in the fall. They grow leaves in the summer but the short days of fall cause them to set flower buds and bloom.

Select plants that are dark green, without broken limbs or dead leaves and free of insects and diseases. Look for lots of flower buds and select colors that complement the rest of your garden. I prefer groups of plants of the same color as opposed to mixing colors, but please yourself since it is your garden. There is no need to buy plants already blooming since buds will open later with good care. Mums prefer good drainage. Thoroughly till beds adding organic matter and add soil if needed to raise beds. This practice will improve drainage but may require you to water more often. Install plant where they will get at least 4 to 6 hours of sun per day; full sun is best. There is no need to fertilize at planting. We do not recommend applying fertilizer without conducting a soil test.

Carefully mulch plants with pine straw, compost, pine bark, etc. Adding mulch will conserve water and reduce weed infestation. Water plants daily for several days after transplanting. Reduce watering after plants are established, the aim is to water plants once per week.

Chrysanthemums do not have a lot of pests, but there are a few. In fact one chrysanthemum is the source of natural insecticide called pyrethrum. Look out for aphids, mealy bugs, and white flies. Scouting for insect pest should be the first line of defense and not chemical control.

Chemical should not be applied to plants with flowers; it will kill pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Mums are a good plant for children to grow since they bloom so quickly. Let the child buy some plants with unopened buds, plant them and then keep them watered. Then enjoy the ensuing floral show.

For further information related to this or any other horticulture topics, you may contact Grantly Ricketts or the Osceola County Master Gardeners at 321-697-3000.