

## Clippings



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A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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**For Immediate Release**

### Nothing to be “Mum” About!

*Beth Ellen Doran, ISU Extension and Outreach Beef Program Specialist*

Fall is just around the corner and soon mums will be appearing in garden centers. The mum, or technically known as the chrysanthemum, comes in two major types – the garden mum and the florist mum. This is an important distinction as it ultimately determines the fate of the mum.

Both the florist mum and the garden mum come from the same original parent. However, florist mums are large-flowered plants with many possible forms, including quilled, pompon and spider. Florist mums are usually used as an indoor plant, but may be used as a short-term bedding plant outside. Florist mums will bloom for the season, but do not survive the winter.



Garden mums have a different root system which allows them to survive winter better when given protection. Most garden mums are perennials in Zones 5 to 9, but the University of Minnesota has developed new varieties that are more cold tolerant for northern gardens.

There are several keys to the survival of the garden mum. First, the likelihood of overwintering is improved when the garden mum is

planted in the spring, which allows the root system to become established. Mulching the garden mum with up to four inches of straw or shredded hardwood in the fall after a hard frost also improves survival. And, research has shown that garden mums survive better if the old growth is left standing through the winter and pruned in the spring.

Chrysanthemums are classified based on the shape and arrangement of the petals. There are eight major types ranging from cushion to single to decorative which has long, tightly overlapping petals. And to add more variety, colors include yellow, orange, red, pink, coral, purple, bronze and white – almost every color except blue or black.



The chrysanthemum is native to China and was cultivated as a crop as early as 15th century B.C. In 8th century A.D., they were introduced to Japan and became the symbol used on the Imperial Seal of Japan. The chrysanthemum was introduced to Europe in the 1600s and to the U.S. during the colonial period. Today they are a favorite fall flower; not only among gardeners but also to butterflies. So, don't be "mum" about this fabulous fall flower!

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