

July 15, 2015



Growing Great Mums
by Sue McDavid
UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

We are still in the hottest part of summer, but it is time to start thinking about fall color in the garden, and chrysanthemums, or mums, are the go-to flower for beautiful fall bloom. There are so many hues and petal formations that it will be difficult choosing which ones to plant. Although mums are technically perennials, many gardeners treat these plants as annuals. However, with proper care, they over-winter just fine in our climate here in El Dorado County.

Mums will begin appearing in nurseries around mid-August or so, and once they are purchased, find a sunny spot in the garden to plant them -- mums need full sun exposure (at least six hours of direct sunlight daily). They prefer well-drained soil and need at least 12 to 18 inches of space between plants. Some cultivars need up to three feet between plants, so check the plant label for mature size.

Plant mums at the same depth in the garden as they were in the pot. Water thoroughly after planting and keep them well watered throughout the growing season. Mulching is a good idea because it will help the soil retain moisture and suppress weeds.

If mums were planted in the spring this year, or in previous years and came back, flower buds were already set by June and may bloom during the summer. In order to get fall bloom, the plants need to be tip-pinch and flower buds removed regularly up until about this time. Doing this helps mums set flower buds again so they will bloom in fall, and also encourages the plant to grow fuller instead of taller.

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Fertilizing chrysanthemums in April or May helps them bloom beautifully and keeps plants healthy and vigorous. Organic fertilizers are preferred with a low nitrogen content; high nitrogen fertilizers will promote foliage growth instead of flowers.

The two most common pests on mums are aphids and spider mites, but both can be controlled using good cultural practices such as proper watering and adequate mulching. Powdery mildew can also be a problem, but good cleanup by removing dead or diseased foliage goes a long way in preventing its spread. Using drip irrigation is also helpful, as overhead sprinkling tends to disperse more of the disease's spores.

Chrysanthemums are a very versatile garden flower. They can be grown as bedding plants or used in borders, and they also make great container plants. Once planted, mums will provide bright color in the garden throughout the fall months and into early winter. Once winter begins in earnest and bloom is over, they can be cut down to the ground with the knowledge they will regrow next spring.

Learn to replace your lawn with a water-wise landscape at this Saturday's free Master Gardener class. UCCE Master Gardeners Heidi Napier and Alice Cantelow will show you how to get rid of grass, change from sprinkler to drip system, and options for replacing grass to include native plants. The Lawn Removal class will be July 18, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court in Placerville. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how replacing lawn can save not only water, but also time and money as you reduce your need for mowing, fertilizer and pesticides.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer your questions at local farmers markets and in their office every Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at the office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmg>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter. You can also find us on Facebook.