

11/29/2017



Potted Chrysanthemums
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It's hard to resist those gorgeous autumn colors as we walk into our favorite grocery store. Whether you buy one of these beauties for yourself or as a hostess gift make sure you buy a healthy plant that has lots of unopened buds. The buds will open over time and you may have flowers for a month or more with proper care.

The first thing you should do is water it. Mums, as they are also called, are typically under-watered in stores so they are probably thirsty. Soak the plant for a couple of hours. Thereafter keep the soil damp, but not wet. For best results, place your plant in a spot near a sunny window. Carefully deadhead spent flowers to keep your plant looking pretty and healthy.

If you think you want to keep your new mum for another season, re-pot it into a pot that is one size larger. Add new potting soil, and shape it to make a nest for the new plant. Carefully lift the plant out of the old pot and place into the new pot. Add more soil around the sides being careful not to cover the base of the plant with new soil.

There are countless colors, shapes, and sizes of chrysanthemums- from tiny flowerets to stately, giants. The most popular variety is *Chrysanthemum x Grandiflorum*. This includes the hardy chrysanthemums that are frost-resistant or partially resistant to frost. These varieties are suitable for cultivation on the ground. Pot mums/Florist's mums are best if you want to grow chrysanthemum in pots.

Although florist mums do best in pots they can flourish in the ground. When flowering has finished, take it outside, cut it back to 4-6 inches and plant it out in your garden. When choosing a spot, keep in mind that the chrysanthemum may have been treated with a growth regulator to keep them compact, so they will probably grow taller in the ground.

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Chrysanthemums grow best in an open, sunny spot. They can tolerate partial shade, especially in the afternoon. They prefer well-drained soil. Feed the mums before the flower buds form to promote healthy roots, bud development, and a vigorous plant. You can either apply 12-6-6 slow release fertilizer during the beginning of growing season or balanced liquid fertilizer according to the product's instructions once every couple of weeks.

Chrysanthemums can get tall and leggy so pinch the growing tips when plants are 8-10" tall to keep the plant more compact. Mums will typically bloom around July. Once the blooms are spent, trim the plant back to 12 inches or so, feed it, and you will likely get another flush of blooms in the fall.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.