

Really, It's OK to Pinch Mums

People have been growing chrysanthemums for more than two thousand years. Mums make bright and colorful gardens. People in China and other Asian cultures make tea with the flowers. Giacomo Puccini, the great Italian composer, even named one of his works after chrysanthemums, "Crisantemi."

One basic kind of mum is the hardy or garden mum. The other basic kind is the florist mum. The garden mum is better able to handle different growing conditions.

There are many varieties of mums. The decorative mum is often seen in gardens. Another popular type, the quill mum, has long, straight petals like a tube or needle.

Chrysanthemum blooms can be white, yellow, gold, red or other colors. The plants often grow one meter high.



The soil for chrysanthemums should be kept moist but well drained so it does not get too wet.

Newly planted mums should be watered two or three times a week, depending on conditions. Plants established in the ground may do well just with normal rainfall.

In climates where temperatures fall below freezing, plant mums at least six weeks before the first frost is expected. That way, the plants will be well established for cold weather.

Placing mulch around the plants can protect them from the cold. Consider using straw or shredded leaves for the mulch. The material will also add nutrients to the soil.

Some gardeners say the most beautiful presentation comes from planting mums close together. But be sure to leave enough space to let air flow between the plants. If not, there may be a greater chance of disease.

To get more blooms, gardeners pinch back the branches when new growth has reached fifteen centimeters. Squeeze about five to seven centimeters off each branch. Pinch it again when a branch grows another twelve to fifteen centimeters. Stop the pinching about one hundred days before you want the plants to bloom.

Welcome to Voice of America's Special English Article Activity

This worksheet is designed to be used with: *Really, It's OK to Pinch Mums.*

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 20 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about chrysanthemums. You will answer questions about how to take care of them, and write a short paragraph about your favorite flower.

1. What is a *chrysanthemum*?

a plant with brightly colored flowers

a type of vegetable

2. What is a shorter way to say the word *chrysanthemum*?

3. Is the following sentence true or false? Correct it if it is false.

There is only one kind of mum.

4. Which variety of mum is best able to handle different growing conditions?

garden mum

florist mum

5. Describe what a mum looks like. What colors can they be?

6. How often should you water mums?

7. Should you place mums near nightlights or streetlights? Why?

8. Why should you plant mums at least six weeks before the first frost is expected?

9. Why should you place mulch around the plants?

10. Why do gardeners pinch back the branches?

OVER TO YOU

What is your favorite kind of flower? What does it look like? How do you take care of it? Write 5 sentences explaining your answer.

ANSWER KEY

1. a plant with brightly colored flowers
2. mum
3. false; There are many varieties of mums.
4. garden mum
5. Chrysanthemum blooms can be white, yellow, gold, red or other colors. The plants often grow one meter high.
6. Newly planted mums should be watered two or three times a week, depending on conditions.
7. No; The light may interfere with their normal growth cycle.
8. That way, the plants will be well established for cold weather.
9. Placing mulch around the plants can protect them from the cold.
10. To get more blooms