



Chrysanthemums for the Autumn Landscape

Fall chrysanthemums, or garden mums, are a tradition in many autumn landscapes. They are unbeatable for adding a fresh burst of color to the late season garden. Yellow and gold varieties glow in the lower light of fall and echo the burnished leaves of trees and shrubs. Warm reds and oranges are more prevalent in the autumn landscape and are a natural balance to the cooler temperatures. Cool pinks and lavenders soften the burgundy and purple tones of changing foliage. Mums with rich, saturated colors provide us with late season, visual excitement as everything around begins to fade to a neutral palette of tans, grays, and browns.

There are many ways to incorporate mums into the fall garden. One way is to interplant them with spring-flowering bulbs. After the mums turn light brown in early winter, leave their foliage for winter interest. Their dried flower heads hold snow beautifully. In March, cut down the foliage to showcase the flowering bulbs. Complete the cycle with the planting of summer annuals.

Mums can give new life to containers that may look tired in the fall or need a color update. To do this, gently pull out the old annuals. Keep any grasses or spikes for height, and maintain trailing plants to soften the pot edges. Mums are large, so one or two will easily fill the center of a pot. Dig out some of the soil to make room for the mum, then plant, loosening the roots gently. Water thoroughly to refresh the planting. Use them in clusters on the front porch, by a light post with pumpkins and cornstalks, or marching up the steps of a deck.

Though botanists have renamed the Chrysanthemum genus *Dendranthemum*, most retailers continue to sell them under the former name. Most garden chrysanthemums sold in fall are not reliably hardy in Chicago, although gardeners increase the chances of over-wintering by planting them in raised or very well drained beds. Placing mulch between plants after the ground freezes is also advised.

New varieties become available each year with new shades, better color retention, more vigor, or longer bloom time. Here are some recent additions to the market to consider - categorized by color.

REDS - The early flowering red 'Bravo' fades to an orange-red over time. The new variety 'Helen' retains its red color longer. 'Raquel', a decorative type flower, and 'Salsa' a daisy with a bright green center both provide late red flowers. Red mums stand out in the landscape with their rich color. Combine them with ornamental grasses or yellow-toned fall foliage.

YELLOWS One of the earliest to bloom, 'Jessica', is a bright yellow followed by 'Janice', a rich golden, and eventually 'Sunny Linda'. The yellow daisy spoon flower of 'Donna' is very cheery. Yellow mums combine well with pink anemones, purple asters, and the changing colors of tree and shrub foliage. If a soft pastel color fits your design, the two-toned 'Cream Frolic' fades gently from a light yellow to white.

BRONZE/ORANGES Bronze-colored mums compliment all the fall colors. 'Shelly' is a lively red and golden bronze bicolor pompom. 'Jennifer' is a bi-color with a mahogany center and amber outer

petals. Both varieties are striking combined with gourds, Indian corn and the dried seed heads of ornamental grasses. 'Warm Megan' is also a double daisy that starts out looking like an orange decorative mum. 'Harvest Emily' is a pumpkin orange early flowering mum, and 'Viking' is a later variety. 'Peachy Lynn' is a beautiful orange-peach bi-color.

PINK/LAVENDER Pink-hued mums are increasing in popularity. Place them between shrubs or grasses that have burgundy fall foliage or with purple asters. They are very pretty with purple and pink buddleia or white Boltonia. Mums also help blend with late blooming roses in the fall landscape. 'Rhapsody' is a dark lavender that holds its color well. 'Valerie' is a vibrant purple decorative that blooms very late. 'Crown Jewel' is a bright rose pink daisy and 'Sundoro' is an iridescent wine-colored decorative.

WHITE To add a bright spot to the garden, plant 'Stephanie', an early blooming snow white daisy type or 'Linda', a decorative type. When planted with evergreen plants as a backdrop, white mums glimmer. They also show off well at night.

Very hardy mums Clara Curtis (pink), Mary Stoker (yellow fading to copper), and Hillside Pink (pale salmon), offer an alternative form to the perfectly mounded garden mums. Their daisy flowers are carried on multiple branched stems that form irregularly shaped drifts of color. An added bonus is that these varieties are more reliably perennial in our Zone 5 growing conditions.

Flower forms

- Decorative - Rayed petals with upturned form; classic mum flower shape
- Quill - Double-rayed tubular petals
- Spoon - Similar to quill but the ends of the petal open to a spoon shape
- Pompom - Petals curve in to form a ball-shape
- Daisy - traditional daisy form with single or double row of rayed petals