

## *Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 61*

### Fall Mums

#### Value

The addition of a mum to the garden extends the planting season of our northern climate. This is because of the flower's resistance to sporadic light frosts that begin in September and October. Selecting varieties that will bloom early, mid or late season will allow for constant colour.

#### Selection

Fall mums are found in a wide range of colours, including pink, mauve, yellow, orange, white, and red. This variety in colour, along with the different flower forms, such as single daisies, tiny buttons and large doubles, makes these perennials so popular among garden enthusiasts.

#### Site

Mums require full sun to look their best but will also survive in half-day sun. Therefore, a southern or western exposure is ideal. A well-drained soil amended with organic matter and mulching will keep the roots cool.

#### Culture

Upon purchasing a fall mum, you will notice that all of the flower buds have already formed and the plant may be already in full bloom. This means that there is no need to fertilize. If the mum is in a fibre pot, you simply cut the sides with a sharp knife and plant the pot in the ground. Plastic pots, however, should always be removed from the root ball of the plant.

The roots are shallow; therefore, watering during dry spells is essential for success.

Plants should never be allowed to wilt because the unnecessary stress will encourage insects and diseases.

#### Problems

Fall mums, fortunately, have few insect pests. Those that may be bothersome are aphids, mites, caterpillars, leaf miners and thrips.

Diseases that may be found on a mum are due to poor watering practices: root rot and bacterial leaf spot.

#### Protection

Since most varieties advertised as fall mums are perennial, they can survive the winter. The earlier they are planted, the greater the likelihood of over wintering. To increase your success, once the soil freezes for the winter, the mums must be mulched. Hay or evergreen branches are most effective as they provide protection from extreme temperatures and prevent the roots from rotting during the cold season. This mulch must be removed in early spring for the same reason.

#### Use

Although many cultivars are perennials, fall mums are sometimes treated as annuals, providing instant colour to replace annuals that are finished blooming for the season. Once a mum has finished blooming, it can be removed and another can take its place. Only established plants will survive the winter.

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