

Mums Highlight Autumn Gardens

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

The chrysanthemum is queen of the garden in autumn. Their rich colors and abundant blooms are especially welcome at this season when other blooms are on the wane.

From now until we get really freezing temperatures they can fill the garden with bloom, or at least provide a bright accent by the front door or where it can be seen from the kitchen window.

Chrysanthemums are a real hobby flower, and many mums growers in this area are members of the Greater Detroit Chrysanthemum Society. These dedicated chrysanthemum growers will be exhibiting their best blooms at a show at Tel-12 Mall on Saturday, Oct. 6 and Sunday, Oct. 7.

It's a good opportunity for gardeners to get acquainted with the wide variety of mums that can be grown in this area. Anyone, whether a member of the Chrysanthemum Society or not, may enter their blooms or artistic arrangements in the show.

Chrysanthemums, which are members of the daisy family, are closely related to the common yellow and white field daisies, to painted daisies and to shasta daisies. There are both hardy garden chrysanthemums and more tender kinds that must be grown in greenhouse.

Chrysanthemums have been grown for thousands of years. They were cultivated in China 2,500 years ago, and about 1,500 years ago they began to be cultivated in Japan where chrysanthemum growing developed into a real cult.

The chrysanthemum is the official national flower of Japan and festivals are held to celebrate its blooms. It wasn't until about 1790 that mums were successfully grown in Europe. They were introduced into America in 1795.

A nursery catalog from 1826 listed 26 varieties. There are now thousands of varieties available—bigger and better and more beautiful than the early growers ever dreamed of. They have come a long way from their early ancestors, which are thought to be like the small yellow mums that grow wild in China and southern Japan.

Colors now include pure white, cream, yellow, gold, bronze, orange, red, pink, orchid, purple—just about all hues except blue. There are pale delicate pastels, deep intense shades, and blends and bi-colors.

Chrysanthemums are classified by the size and form of the flowers, and also by the growth and form of the plant.

In addition to the regular garden mums, which grow from one to three feet tall with clumps of upright stalks, there are cushion types which are nine to 15 inches tall but may have a spread of 30 inches. The latter tend to be bushy and much branched with a multi-

tude of small flowers. The regular garden mums have fewer but larger flowers.

There is also a type of hardy chrysanthemum known as a cascade. These are plants with thin, wiry stems that can be trained to trail downward from a pot or basket.

The hardy garden mums show wide variations in size and form of the blooms. Over a dozen distinct forms are recognized. Smallest of all are the button types with clusters of little round flowers less than an inch in diameter. The pompons are about two inches in diameter and also grow in clusters.

At the other end of the size scale are the Japanese or large exhibition chrysanthemums. They have full rounded heads of blooms over six inches in diameter. The central or top petals curl inward and the bottom petals

hang down. All petals are curved or curled to make a big shaggy head. Some are irregular and mop-like. Others have evenly overlapping petals.

Most frequently grown are what are called "decorative" chrysanthemums. The flowers are double and two to four inches across. Among the more unusual types are "quills," with petals rolled into tubes, and "spoons," which are quill-like, but have the ends of the petals flattened and spread out.

Most exotic of all are the "spider" mums which have long slender twisted tubular petals of irregular length and the "thread" mums which are even more delicate and sinuous than the spiders.

Although the garden-type mums are hardy and not difficult to grow, they do require certain special techniques. The best flowers are

obtained if the plants are reset each year. New plants should be grown from cuttings taken in spring when the sprouts are about six inches high, or from stolons, which are underground stems growing out from the mass of roots. Remove as many stolons or tip cuttings as you need and discard the rest of the old plant.

The tip cuttings will root in a few weeks if inserted in damp vermiculite and kept shaded.

In either case, a bushy new plant can develop from a single new piece. When the new plant is about six inches tall pinch off the growing tip. This forces side branches to develop. Repeat this pinching process several times whenever the new growth is about six inches long. Stop pinching in mid-July to give buds time to develop.

For biggest blooms, rub off

side buds and allow only a terminal bud and a few side buds to develop on each plant. If you'd rather have more, though smaller, flowers don't disbud.

Chrysanthemums need a sunny location and grow best in rich light soil that has lots of organic material in it. The experts recommend feeding with a 5-10-5 fertilizer when the plants are six to eight inches tall. Repeat the feeding every 10 days until the buds show color, then discontinue the feeding.

Keep the plants well watered during the growing season and cultivate to keep the weeds down and the soil loose. Use care not to disturb the roots which tend to be quite shallow.

Although many mums will grow and flower without all this care, the extra effort

will be amply repaid when fall comes and the garden is filled with blooms.

The most popular garden mums bloom relatively early in fall. Some even come into bloom in August. Late blooming kinds are not really satisfactory unless they get special handling or protection from hard frosts.

However, mum fanciers often enjoy the challenge of growing these late types because they have such large, beautiful blooms. Since flower bud formation is stimulated by nights with over 10 hours of darkness, the plants can be covered with a black cloth thus controlling the hours of darkness. Also, frames covered with sheets of plastic can be used to protect the plants from frosts so blooms can be had well into November.

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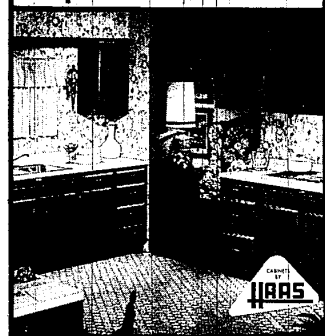
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