## What to do With Those Mums

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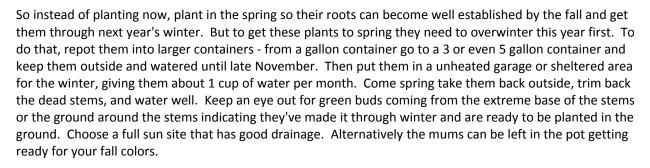
There are several popular fall plants and one of those is the mum. Mums grow in nice, rounded forms and reliably produce flowers in the whites, reds, oranges, yellows, pinks, and purples with little to moderate hep from the gardener. With the right mum variety selection and proper care, some mums can become permanent residents of your garden.

There are two main categories of mums; "florist" and "garden" mums. Florist mums aren't winter hardy but are quite spectacular with dense flowers, compact growth habits, and are favored for putting in fall pots. With our recent weather any floral mums would've fatally bit the dust already if they were left outside. Garden mums also have wilted by now but the difference between the two types of mum is the florist's mum is dead while the garden mum probably isn't.

So instead of throwing away a perfectly healthy garden mum, your first inclination is probably to plant it. Well, don't, or at least not yet anyway! There's a relatively easy process to follow that will get the garden mum ready for planting when the proper time comes. But I think it's easier to understand what mums don't like which then says to avoid planting them in the fall.

The one thing that kills more garden mums than anything else is poor drainage or roots that are constantly wet. Consider the ground right now which is fairly representative of average for this time of year. We've had

some light precipitation, day time temps are somewhat cool, night time temps are consistently below freezing, and all trees, shrubs, and other plants have dropped most if not all of their leaves so consequently their water use is very reduced resulting in high soil moisture. See the problem?



In addition to liking full sun and good drainage, garden mums like periodic liquid fertilizations spread throughout the growing season or a single top dressed slow-release fertilizer in mid-spring. Pinch them back a couple of times up to July 4<sup>th</sup> to keep them more compact and come fall you'll have a beautifully blooming plant in the fall.

Art Smith is a co-owner of East Pierre Landscape and Garden Center, 5400 SD Hwy 34, Pierre

