

# fresh

focus



## Chrysanthemums are a big happy family—some forward-looking, some delightfully old-fashioned.

By Bill McKinley AIFD and Bruce Wright

In the role of floral-industry workhorse, the chrysanthemum is second only to the carnation. And, like carnations, mums run the risk of being under-appreciated precisely because they are so hardy, versatile, and affordable.

Diverse in color and form, mums hold intriguing possibilities for use in everything from high-style designs to traditional, garden-style arrangements. They can be used as filler flowers for large arrangements, as mass flowers for medium to small bouquets, and as form flowers for contemporary designs. In addition, chrysanthemums are available year-round and are one of the least-expensive cut flowers.

In some forms at least, mums do carry a certain Oriental mystique. Cultivated in China since the 15th century B.C.E., chrysanthemums were introduced to Japan around the eighth century C.E. and adopted as a symbol of the emperor's power and glory. Europeans discovered the flower, along with other treasures of the Orient, in the 17th century. The botanical name given to the genus by Linnaeus (*Chrysanthemum*) means "golden flower" in Greek, reflecting its characteristic color.

Today, the mum palette extends to many shades of yellow, bronze, rust, white, green, burgundy, and even lavender. Colors and forms are especially diverse for **spray mums**. This is now the industry-recognized name, replacing pompon mums, for cut mums that are branched and contain several blossoms on each stem. Spray mums are produced by removing the center flower bud, which allows the side branches to elongate and form flowers.

Conversely, **standard or disbud** mums are characterized by a single large flower atop an un-branched stem. The grower achieves this form by removing the side buds, leaving the center bud to develop and flower.

### It takes all types

Say "mum" or "chrysanthemum" and what most consumers will visualize are standard incurved or **football mums** (so named for the tradition of using this type of mum in decorations, replete with long streamers, that are part of the football-season ritual in many areas).

Some consumers might even be surprised to learn that what they think of as "daisies" are actually mums (unless the "daisies" are gerberas, asters, or other members of the vast flower family Compositae). In their standard, disbud form, **daisy mums** are also known as rover mums.

Incurved and daisy mums seem quite different: one rounded, the other flat, with distinct centers. Somewhere in between the two are **cremons**: standard mums with large, flat ray petals surrounding a puffy disk center. They correspond to the anemone type of spray mum (see the chart that appears on the next page).

**Spider or fuji mums** add yet a fourth type to the list of standard mums. Their petals are rolled into elongated tubes, often with a flat, scoop-like tip. Smaller versions of all these types and more are found among the spray mums, which also include starburst or snowflake mums, similar in form to a spider or fuji, except that the rolled petal ends are frilly in appearance.

### Fashionable fillers

In recent years breeders have been hard at work enhancing and expanding the available varieties of spray mums in particular. They have responded to the popularity of light, bright chartreuse green by introducing spray mums like Kermit and Yoko Ono, as well as disbud spiders in the same color. As sunflowers came to enjoy a revival of interest, mum breeders came up with Viking mums, which look like miniature sunflowers.

Viking was one of the first mums in the Santini series to gain widespread recognition. Santinis, minis, and even micro-mini mums have emerged in response to the desire on the part of bouquet makers for long-lived, small-flowered fillers. The shape of a branching stem is important here: where the spray mums of a decade or two ago flowered on a stem whose lateral branches formed a pyramidal shape, with the flowers descending the sides of the pyramid, today's "filler" mums have been bred for longer laterals,

so that the flowers form an almost flat surface. The whole stem can be included in a bouquet and most of the flowers will be visible from the top.

Mums, however, are not only for hand-tied, mass bouquets; they remain one of the most multitalented flowers in the shop. Treat them with respect, and you'll find they return the favor, offering "golden" vase life, versatility, beauty and style. 🌸

For chrysanthemum care tips, turn the page.



#### Button

Compact, with solid petals from the edge to the center. ¾ to 1¼ inches in diameter  
**COLORS:** Yellow, white, lavender, green, bi-color combinations  
**VASE LIFE:** 14-21 days



#### Cushion/decorative

Not as dense as the button, but with solid petals from the edge to the center. 1¼ to 2 inches in diameter  
**COLORS:** White, yellow, bronze, lavender, purple, burgundy, bi-color combinations  
**VASE LIFE:** 14-21 days



#### Daisy

A flat center disk is surrounded by mostly flat ray petals. 1¼ to 2 inches in diameter  
**COLORS:** White, yellow, lavender, purple, bronze, butterscotch, burgundy, many bi-color combinations  
**VASE LIFE:** 14-21 days

Illustrating the major types of spray mums are varieties available from Yoder Brothers ([www.yoder.com](http://www.yoder.com)), the world's leading breeder and propagator of chrysanthemums. Clockwise from top left on this page: Zip (a white button mum), Swing (red cushion), Sound (lavender daisy), Yellow Contact (a spoon-tipped spider), and Sunny Puma, a cheery example of the duet or anemone spray mum.

Pictured opposite are Tobago, a red Santini with a bright yellow-green center, and ice-white Arctic Queen. For more on these new Dutch-bred mum varieties, turn the page.



#### Duet/Anemone

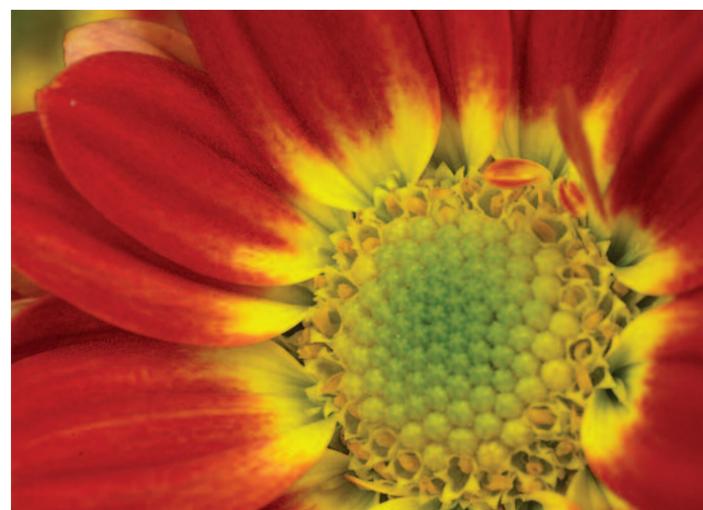
A puffy center is made up of numerous short petals surrounded by larger flat ray petals. 1½ to 2 inches in diameter.  
**COLORS:** Lavender, purple, yellow, white, yellow/white bi-color, lavender/purple bi-color  
**VASE LIFE:** 10-16 days



#### Spider/Fuji

Similar in structure to a cushion, except each petal is rolled into an elongated tube, oftentimes with a flat, scoop-like tip. 1½ to 2½ inches in diameter.  
**COLORS:** White, yellow, lavender  
**VASE LIFE:** 10-16 days





*Intriguing varieties recently introduced by Dutch breeders include, at top left, Sizzle® Yellow, a double spray mum with spoon-shaped petals. At top right, Black Eye features pure white petals and a deep black center outlined in green; it is supplied both as a regular spray mum and as a santini, or mini mum. Tobago, at right, is a new bicolor santini, launched in July of last year, with at least 15 compact flowers or buds at the end of each spray. Above, Arctic Queen, a white spray with a green heart, was named for a legendary queen whose flower-decked crown was found preserved in Arctic ice.*

## Care tips

Though mums boast a long vase life, several steps should be followed to enhance flower beauty and extend vase life.

- Purchase spray mums that have one-half of the flowers on each stem open. Immature buds will not enlarge into full-sized flowers, but are useful for texture and size variations in arrangements.
- Standard mums should be purchased with the blossom two-thirds to three-fourths open.
- Avoid stems that have black or gray blotches and blossoms with brown or discolored petals, an indication of botrytis mold.
- Remove all but the upper leaves on the stems as they turn yellow and detract from the flowers.
- Cut 1-2 inches from the stem end, making certain to remove any woody or damaged tissue. Do not crush the stem ends as this impedes water uptake.
- Place in a tepid flower-food solution and condition for several hours or overnight prior to placing in a 36-degree F cooler.