

Potted Profits

MAKE SURE CUSTOMERS LOOKING TO REFRESH their summer-weary potted flowering plants find stand-out varieties and freshness in your store. Fortunately, it takes just a few minutes in the store to preserve freshness, according to Mike Aulenbach, product manager at Yoder Brothers Inc., who says the time you spend will more than pay for itself in customer satisfaction and sales. McGuinness offers these tips for potted mums and azaleas:

Magnificent Mums

In-store tips. Follow these steps in the store to ensure your mums look their best:

- Immediately remove from shipping box and take off sleeves.
- Check for water. If media is dry to the touch, remove pot covers and slowly water until water comes out the bottom. If covers aren't removed, water can gather and cause root rot.
- Monitor daily to be sure media remains moist to the touch. You and your customers will lose several days of longevity each time a mum wilts. Pot mums may require watering every other day, depending on temperature and light levels.
- Display in medium light, comfortable for reading but not as bright as direct sunlight.
- Keep displays at moderate temperatures; between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal.
- To keep plants fresh and healthy-looking for better consumer appeal, remove yellow leaves and damaged buds daily.

Customer care.

Consumers count on you for guidance —



POT SHOTS 'Point Pelee' pot mum (right) has more flowers, a fuller canopy and more uniform flowering than 'Pelee,' says Yoder. 'Bittersweet' (left) is one of two new Keepsake Azalea varieties from Yoder; it features full, uniform, dark coral blooms.



Photos To Go



More Mums and Azaleas

Check out Yoder Brothers fall selections by clicking on the Photos to Go icon on SAF's member Web site, www.safnow.org.

giving them tips for success reinforces your role as the expert and will ensure they have success with the plant — and come back for more. Pass these tips to customers:

Light: Pot mums and Fleurettes will tolerate most light conditions in homes or offices. Bright, indirect light for half a day will give best results. Avoid direct afternoon light, which can burn the flowers.

Temperature: Mums will perform well in both home and office temperatures. Longest life will be obtained at 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid setting mums on appliances that give off heat, such as a television. Also avoid placement near heater vents or drafty locations that can rapidly dry out the plants.

Water: Don't let your mum plant wilt. Every time a mum wilts, you lose at least a day of flower life. Pot mums may require watering every other day, depending on temperature and light levels. Water the pot from above until water runs out of the bottom of the pot. Remove decorative pot covers and drain excess water. Don't allow your mum to stand in water for more than a few hours.

Azaleas: Always Available

Azaleas offer truly unusual beauty and quality as flowering plants for the home and patio, and they're available fresh (not stored) 52 weeks a year. They're also available in unique forms like 4.5-inch, 6-inch and 8-inch braided trees in assorted colors. A key factor when ordering is to request plants be shipped at Stage 3 or 4: tightly rolled into "candle" appearance. Plants received at Stages 0, 1 or 2 will not fully open in the retail or home environment.

In-store and customer care. Don't allow an azalea to wilt. Keep the soil constantly moist, but don't let plants sit in water for more than two hours. The plant should feel heavier after watering. If pots are very light when picked up, you probably need to water it. Another little-known tip to pass to customers: Don't apply fertilizer while in bloom. It reduces flower life. 🌱

—Kate F. Penn

Email: kpenn@safnow.org