

Chrysanthemum: Care Tips for the Florist

1. When buying chrysanthemums, make sure that the centers are yellow or green. Discolored, brownish-black centers indicate that the flowers are beginning to decay.

2. When buying large, disbudded mums, try flicking the flower heads lightly with a finger. If petals fall off, the flower is past its prime.

3. When buying daisy pomps, watch out for powdery yellow material on the surface—this indicates that the flower is old. Check the backs of the flower heads, too. Wilted or dry petals are another indication of age or disease.

4. After the mums arrive in your shop, unpack as soon as possible and begin conditioning the flowers.

5. To condition, remove any foliage that will be underwater. Cut off about 2 inches from the bottoms of the stems and shred the ends of woody varieties. Put the flowers in warm water (100° to 110° F) mixed with preservative and place in a cool (40° F), dark area with high relative humidity (approximately 90 percent to 94 percent) until the mums begin to draw water. This will occur in about 2 to 3 hours.

6. Store chrysanthemums in a cool place with plenty of water and preservative until ready to be arranged and sold.

7. Check the water level daily and replenish with a preservative solution as needed.

8. Treat large mums with extra care to prevent shattering. If these flowers are bumped or knocked sharply, all the petals will fall off in one large cascade. To ensure against this catastrophe, spray the backs of the petals with special mum tightener or drip candle wax carefully and lightly on the backs. Hold the flowers still until the wax hardens.

9. Large-headed mums may need extra support in arrangements. If the flowers are large enough to crush ordinary floral foam, use chicken wire or other material to support the stems.

10. Avoid the use of mums for customers who are allergic to pollen. Chrysanthemum flowers have an especially high concentration of pollen.

11. Be aware of the special significance of mums to certain ethnic groups. To many Italians, white mums symbolize funerals, while yellow mums represent the same thing to the Japanese. Such colors should be avoided for occasions other than funerals.

12. Keep mums stored in areas away from carnations, roses or other blooms sensitive to ethylene, since mums emit large quantities of this gas.

What to Tell Your Customers

1. Keep mums away from drafts and direct sunlight. Too much air circulation and high heat will cause the flowers to lose water rapidly, leading to premature wilting. Mums should be guarded especially from heat sources such as radiators or television sets.

2. Check the level of water every day and replenish as needed.

3. The use of floral preservative is recommended. Preservative is available from the florist and should be used according to directions on the package.

4. Chrysanthemums properly cared for should last from seven to fourteen days, though the foliage may deteriorate sooner than that.—*C.J.S.*

Flowers&