

HARDY MUMS - TIPS FOR FINISHING QUALITY PLANTS

By Robert D. Fitzgerald

HARDY MUMS do not demand the attention many other commercial crops require. Their relative ease of culture, however, should not influence the growers' attitude toward producing quality plants. Whether the crop is field-grown or pot-grown, great expense is invested in planting, pinching, irrigating, etc. and this investment should be protected until the finished plant is sold.

The following tips should help growers produce quality plants:

1. Fertilization: Light feeding should continue until plants are sold. Rich, green foliage and intense flower color will sell plants!
2. Pest Control: Care must be taken to prevent rapid spread of insects and diseases. A regular preventative program is best. Spray every 7-10 days with a good general purpose spray containing D.D.T., malathion, zineb or ferbam. Use Kelthane if mites

are present. Dusts may be used as a temporary measure - but there is no substitute for complete coverage given by sprays.

Flower diseases: Should wet, rainy weather prevail during the Fall, mist spray every 3-7 days with Zineb 75% W.P. or Captan 50% W.P. at 3/4 lbs. per 100 gallons of water to prevent botrytis and other flower diseases. The same fungicides can be used on cut blooms or pot plants scheduled for storage or shipment. Apply sprays in the field.

3. Disbudding - With some varieties (i.e. Harvest Giants), disbudding terminal or lateral buds will improve flowering. Experience is the best guide.
4. Digging Field Plants: Irrigation before and after digging will help plants recover quickly. See to it that employees leave sufficient room in the containers for water.
5. Delivery: Water thoroughly before delivery. Remind retailers and customers of the importance of water while plants remain in containers.
6. Finally: Take notes on this year's crop. Don't make the same mistakes next year!!