

## **GARDEN MUMS**

As soon as garden chrysanthemums are done flowering, you may cut the plants back to 2 to 3 inches high. Some gardeners prefer to leave the top growth so that it provides some protection from fluctuating soil temperatures. If you choose to cut the tops off, apply a layer of mulch over the top of your mums after the ground has frozen or if the forecast calls for a sharp drop in temperature. Mums should not completely dry out during the winter. It may be necessary to water occasionally if sufficient rain or snow has not fallen.

### ***Perennial Garden Clean-Up***

Fall is traditionally a time for cleaning up gardens. Normally, we recommend clear-cutting dead stems to help control insect and disease problems. With herbaceous perennials that have been pest free, you might want to consider leaving some to provide structure, form, and color to the winter garden. For example, ornamental grasses can be attractive even during the winter months. But those near structures should be cut to the ground because they can be a fire hazard. Perennials with evergreen or semi-evergreen foliage can provide color. Some perennials are naturally messy after dormancy and should be cut back in the fall. Foliage can be left for other reasons. For example, foliage left on marginally hardy plants such as tender ferns helps ensure overwintering of plant crowns. Seed heads on some perennial plants can provide seed for birds.

### ***There is Still Time to Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs***

Generally, it is recommended to plant hardy bulbs (especially daffodils) in October to give them enough time to root before winter. But it is certainly not too late to plant them now. As long as the soil temperatures are above 40 degrees F, the bulbs should continue root development. Although many of the best bulbs have probably already been purchased, garden centers may still have a good selection. Be sure to select large, firm bulbs that have not begun to sprout. While many bulbs can adapt to a wide range of soil types, none can tolerate poorly drained soil.

Prepare the planting bed by adding organic matter such as peat moss, well-rotted manure, or compost and mix into the soil. Adequate fertility is essential. It is best to rely on a soil test to determine what nutrients are needed. Garden soils that have been fertilized regularly in the past may have excess levels of phosphorus. Excess phosphorus can interfere with the uptake of other essential micronutrients. In such cases, it would be better to use a fertilizer relatively high in nitrogen such as a 29-5-4, 27-3-3, or something similar. Apply these fertilizers at the rate of 2/3 pound per 100 square feet. Organic sources of fertilizers low in phosphorus include blood meal (12-0-0) applied at 5 to 10 pounds per 100 square feet, cottonseed meal (6-0.4-1.5) applied at the rate of 10 pounds per 100 square feet and soybean meal (7-2-1) applied at the rate of 8 pounds per 100 square feet. In the absence of a soil test, or if phosphorus is needed, add a low analysis, balanced fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4 at the rate of 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet of bed. Mix all amendments thoroughly with the soil before planting the bulbs. The size and species of the bulb determines how deep to plant. In general, the depth to the bottom of the bulb should be about 2 to 3 times the size of the bulb, but check the planting instructions specific to each particular flower.

### ***Apply Late-Season Nitrogen Application in November***

November is the time to give cool-season lawns the last nitrogen application of the season. Why November? Because while top growth slows in response to cool temperatures, grass plants are still making food (carbohydrates) by photosynthesis. A November nitrogen application helps boost the photosynthesis rate. Carbohydrates that are not used in growth are stored in the crown and other storage tissues in the plant. These carbohydrate reserves help the turfgrass green up earlier in the spring and sustain growth into May without the need for early-spring (March or April) nitrogen. Those early-spring nitrogen applications are less desirable because they can lead to excessive shoot growth and reduced root growth. Other benefits of November-applied nitrogen for cool-season grasses include improved winter hardiness, root growth and shoot

density. How much should you apply? One to 1 to 1 ½ pounds actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn area is sufficient. Following the recommended spreader setting on the fertilizer bag should apply the correct amount of fertilizer. In order for this application to be effective, the nitrogen must be readily available to the plant, because the growing season is nearly over. Therefore, for a November application, use a soluble (quickly-available) nitrogen carrier such as urea or ammonium sulfate. Many turfgrass fertilizers sold in garden centers and other retail outlets also contain soluble nitrogen. Avoid products that contain water-insoluble nitrogen (slow-release) for this application. As always, sweep up any fertilizer that gets on driveways, sidewalks, or streets and reapply it to the lawn.

### ***What is the “Wild” Shrub with the Bright Red Berries?***

People in the eastern half of the state have been reporting shrubs with bright red berries growing wild. The berries are clustered around the stem and the leaves are still a bright green color. These are likely one of two species of bush honeysuckle, Amur or Tatarian. Each species can reach 6 to 20 feet tall. This landscape shrub has become a serious understory invasive throughout the Midwest from eastern Kansas to Ohio. Many states have it on their noxious weeds list. All of our native honeysuckles are vines, similar to the vining Japanese honeysuckle. Amur and Tatarian honeysuckles are very noticeable in the spring as they put out leaves earlier than most other trees and shrubs. Leaves also stay green much later into the fall. This long growing season gives it a competitive advantage over other native species, and the vigorous growth can take over a woodland understory, reducing the number of native woodland wildflowers and other shrubs. If you want to promote native species, then controlling bush honeysuckles is needed.

Honeysuckle seedlings can be readily hand pulled when the soil is damp. Chemical control is needed for larger infestations, as cutting alone results in vigorous resprouting. Foliar applications of glyphosate (i.e., Roundup) in late summer and fall works well as does applications of Crossbow (2,4-D + triclopyr). Treating cut stumps with Tordon RTU (picloram), or concentrated (20% - 50%) glyphosate is also quite effective. Several studies have shown basal spraying with triclopyr (Garlon) not to be effective, while basal applications with 2,4-D or picloram products work well, using an oil carrier to penetrate the bark. Please follow all label instructions when using pesticides.