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### *Your Perennial Garden Mums*

Upon completion of planting out your perennial garden mums, be sure they are watered in very well. This is needed so that the roots that were bound in the pot can, on a microscopic level, touch the surrounding soil in your flower bed(s). Watering would really only need to be done every other day for the first week after planting, which also depends on rain. Never rely on rain alone to water in your Mums! It may not be enough moisture to reach the root zones of the plants to initiate root contact.

After the mums lose their blooms, you will notice a slow gradual process called "die back" where the plants main emphasis goes back into its roots. The tops of the plants begin to brown, and then eventually look "finished." This will not happen until we get into severe cold temperatures. Do not remove any of the "finished flowering branches" until the early Spring.

Come early Spring, you will notice new growth beginning at the base of the "finished flowering branches" from last year. Now is the time to remove the dead stems by clipping them off from the base, but be sure you do not accidentally clip off any new growth for this growth is what you want for the new year!

By Memorial Day, your Mums will have grown tremendously! Depending on the spring temperatures...before, on, or around Memorial Day, you will want to "cut back" the new growth. If you measure your plants in thirds, cut off the top two-thirds, leaving one-third left. The idea here is to 1) discourage legginess (stretching), and 2) to make the plant begin to "branch out" as opposed to growing straight up. Mums are generally cut back two times a year, and this is the first time.

The second time to cut back your Mums would be before or around the fourth of July. As you will note from your previous cuts, the plant(s) have branched from the sides of the stems. Now, you want to cut back the **branched stems**. Be sure not to cut back too far, in which too far would be cutting them back into the original stems. This will again discourage legginess, and will encourage more branching. The more branches you have, the more blooms you will have in the Autumn months! Now, you do not need to cut them back anymore. You should fertilize your plants approximately twice a week depending on rain and/or drought. Do not fertilize them during drought periods - just make sure they are not dry for too long of a period of time. Using an "osmocote" fertilizer (like 19-6-12) is helpful too, along with any Miracle Gro applications you do. Mums are very heavy feeders, so don't worry about "over-feeding" them. Some drying of the mum plants is actually beneficial. It discourages root rot and also foliar diseases as well as insect infestations. Do not let your mums dry out for too long a period of time. If they have wilted only for a short period of time (less than 24hours) then they will recover without any problems. Any longer may be harder for recovery.

***THANK YOU AND WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR GARDEN MUMS!***