

During some years the weather conditions require some adjustments to the regular cultural practices in order to finish garden mums on time and of the right size. The tips for finishing garden mums are the same every year, but your local weather conditions need to be factored in to know which way to adjust.

### Water

Water can be the best growth regulator for a garden mum crop. If plants are bigger than you want for any given stage of the crop, reduce your irrigation frequency so that the plants start to wilt some before irrigation is applied. This will reduce the soft lush growth and help to tone and toughen the plants for retail. If you are looking to gain some height and plant volume, keeping your plant more evenly moist will actually increase plant size even after you start to see bud set. It is important to note that the extremes can still cause damage so do not dry down pots excessively or keep plants so wet that you create the opportunity for root rot.

### Fertilizer

Fertilizer can help drive plant growth especially early in the crop if your plants were exposed to conditions that allowed buds to set prematurely. Ammonium sources of nitrogen are great for keeping plants soft and actively growing. This is very helpful at the beginning of the crop, but is likely not wanted at the end of the crop. Many growers only use ammonium based fertilizers for the first two to five weeks of their crop. Using nitrate based fertilizers at the end of the crop will create a stronger plant and not interfere with the natural flower timing. Also, an overall reduction in fertilizer rate at the end of the crop will help reduce excess growth and speed up flower timing.

### Growth Regulation

Many growers use growth retardants to tone plants and maintain proper size. Early in the crop B-Nine<sup>®</sup> plant growth regulator is often used to reduce internodes and build a strong plant base. Once the plants have started to initiate flower buds, B-Nine<sup>®</sup> sprays can delay flower bud development and make the plants flower later than expected. Unlike B-Nine<sup>®</sup> sprays, [Bonzi<sup>®</sup> plant growth regulator](#)

drenches at low concentrations can control growth without affecting flower timing. This can be very helpful as the crop is finishing if you need to prevent plants from overgrowing their space before delivery.

### Pest and Diseases

Continue to scout the crop regularly for signs of pests and disease problems. Two-spotted spider mites and caterpillars can quietly invade and hide within the canopy. Check leaves within the plant canopy for the presence of these pests and evidence of feeding damage. Watch for moth activity in the field, as this can be an indication that young worms will be coming soon. It is important to monitor thrips populations, particularly when flower buds begin to crack color, as these pests will be ready to invade the blooms. Sprays of [Avid<sup>®</sup> miticide/insecticide](#) and [Conserve<sup>®</sup>](#) insect control can be applied at this stage for Thrips control.

Occasionally, root, stem and foliar diseases can develop on mums during the mid-late stages of production. Hot summer temperatures and periodic rains can put additional stress on the root system which can make them prone to infection. Build up of salts in the planting media can also contribute to root problems, so monitor the EC and pH regularly to be sure it is within the proper range. The Pour-Thru Method can be used to extract the soil solution to check these parameters without destructive sampling. A preventive fungicide treatment may be helpful when extended periods of rain are expected. A fungicide drench using [Subdue Maxx<sup>®</sup> fungicide](#), [Segway<sup>™</sup>](#) fungicide or [Truban<sup>®</sup>](#) fungicide plus [Medallion<sup>®</sup> WDG fungicide](#) will provide protection against root and crown diseases caused by *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia* and *Fusarium*. To protect the upper canopy against leaf spotting diseases, rust, aerial *Rhizoctonia* and *Fusarium spp.*, spray applications of [Daconil<sup>®</sup> Ultrex fungicide](#) or [Daconil<sup>®</sup> Weatherstik fungicide](#) (prior to bloom) and [Heritage<sup>®</sup> fungicide](#) will be beneficial. Always consult product labels for information on use rates and application instructions.

A successful garden mum program starts with a good crop plan including variety selection and crop schedule. Each year some minor adjustments are needed depending on the weather at each stage of the crop. Keeping good notes will help you make a better plan for the next year as well as allow you to see what adjustments are needed during the current growing season. Use fertilizer and water to help steer your crop the way it needs to go, and then growth regulators can be used to fine tune individual varieties.



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