



Chrysanthemums (Mum) Care

Written by : Bryan Hartman

Chrysanthemums are one of the easiest perennials to grow. Though they are not specific to any season, Chrysanthemums (aka mums) are showstoppers in the fall, blooming well after other garden plants have stopped for the season.

Hundreds of varieties of Chrysanthemums provide a multitude of options for height, color, flower size, and time of bloom. You can pick and choose to fit your needs. Regardless of whether you are getting your Chrysanthemums for inside your home or outside if you want their blooms to last the longest, get ones where the flowers haven't opened yet. Unless of course, you have a party or something happening soon and you need the mums for your decor. In that case, it'd be best to get fully flowered ones, rather than waiting and hoping the flowers open in time.

If you want to take care of your mums indoors, the first thing you should do is to make sure they're in a pot with adequate room for their roots to grow. Also, the pot should be filled with a good potting mix that provides decent drainage. A lot of us just buy mums for fall decor and just stick them in a pretty pot while still in their black garden center pot.

Next, make sure your mums are getting enough sunlight. Mums love the sun, so indoor mums will do their best if placed close to a window that lets a lot of sunlight in every day. Also, make sure to give your mums enough water. And don't just pour water over the top of them and let it drip down into the soil. That's just asking for the plants to develop fungi. Instead, water close to the roots of the plant, saturating the soil, not the leaves or too much of the stems. Mums should be watered frequently when first potted, then given about 1 inch of water a week, once they're more established. If their leaves start to wilt, they need to be watered more frequently. Lastly, don't forget to "deadhead" your mums as necessary. To deadhead your mums, you can use your fingers or pruning shears to pinch off any dead flowers. Try to cut them off above the next set of leaves on the stem. You can also remove dead leaves when deadheading. Deadheading your mums helps to make your mums look neater and helps to extend how long they bloom.



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Tree Surface Roots: Why They Happen And What To Do

Source: Rick Durham, horticulture extension professor

Big shade trees are a gift — until their roots start showing in the lawn. Surface roots make mowing tough, trip people up and can heave sidewalks. They aren't a sign your tree is failing, though. In most cases, they're a normal response to how roots grow and how soil behaves.

Most tree roots spread outward in the top 4–15 inches of soil because that's where oxygen is available. In heavy, compacted, or poorly drained soil, oxygen is scarce, so roots creep even closer to the surface. Each year those roots thicken, the way a trunk does, and they can push through the turf. Erosion from rain and foot traffic exposes them more. Nearly any mature tree can develop surface roots, though poplars, willows, maples (Norway, red, silver), sycamores, aspens, beeches and some ash and pin oaks are frequent culprits. The worst thing you can do is cut or grind off visible roots. That invites decay and insects, removes thousands of feeder roots that absorb water and nutrients, and can weaken the tree's stability. Piling on lots of soil is risky too; deep fill over the root zone can suffocate roots.

First, consider adding a mulch layer over exposed roots. A two- to three-inch layer of shredded wood or chips cushions the roots, reduces mowing around the tree and holds moisture. Extend the mulch ring as far as you can — ideally to the dripline — and keep it pulled back a few inches from the trunk. Skip "volcano" mulching — don't pile mulch around the trunk. If you want plants under the canopy, hand-dig small pockets within the mulched area for shade-loving perennials or groundcovers between roots; avoid rototillers and do not add thick layers of soil first. Make sure plant roots extend down into the soil and not just into the mulch.

Growing grass under trees is also an option but has its own challenges. Even shade-tolerant species may not provide a thick enough cover to be attractive. The grass and tree roots will constantly compete for moisture and nutrients, and you may find yourself watering the grass under the tree more often than in other parts of the yard. Nevertheless, if you want to try grass, rake away debris of sticks and excess leaves, then add just enough topsoil — a half inch or less — just enough to fill in between roots and smooth the surface. Seed with a shade-tolerant grass and water as needed. When mowing, you may want to set your mower deck a bit higher to avoid damaging any exposed roots. Because roots continue to thicken, expect to repeat this light topdressing every year or two rather than burying everything at once.

Planning and planting choices help prevent the problem. In compacted or clay soils, select trees with deeper root systems such as black gum, ginkgo, yellowwood, zelkovas and many oaks are good options. You can also choose smaller ornamental trees whose roots are less likely to grow large enough to cause trouble. Plant slightly high (about two inches above grade), give trees room near pavement, and check local rules before planting along streets. Remember that roots extend well beyond property lines and will follow air, water, and space.

In short, surface roots are mostly an aesthetic and maintenance issue — a response to soil conditions rather than a sign of poor tree health. Treat the soil gently, protect the roots, and manage the area with topdressing or mulch. Your tree will thank you — and your mower will, too.



Rejuvenating Your Kentucky Lawn: Fall Lawn Care

Source: Kenneth Clayton, extension associate in turfgrass

Taking care of your lawn during the fall is as important as it is during spring and summer, even more so for lawns with cool-season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue. Nearly all fertilizers and broadleaf herbicides should be applied in the fall, and it is by far the best time for lawn renovations, such as seeding. When it comes to the timing of renovations, spring is better than summer, but fall is best of all.

Here are some tips for cool-season grasses:

Fertilize – Fertilizing your lawn in the fall will help it grow stronger, thicker and greener. Cool-season grasses should be fertilized with nitrogen in the fall as temperatures begin to cool and days shorten. Applying later in the fall when cool-season grasses are actively growing can help rejuvenate the lawn after a stressful summer and improve competition over undesirable warm-season weeds such as bermudagrass. Use either farm fertilizers, such as urea or ammonium sulfate, or specialty fertilizers found in garden centers. The normal rate is 1 to 1.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. Remember to spread it evenly over your lawn.

Control weeds – If broadleaf weeds such as clover, dandelion, plantain and chickweed are growing in your lawn, fall is the best time of year to get them under control. Almost all broadleaf weeds can be controlled selectively in turfgrass by applying a three-way mix of 2, 4-D, MCP and Dicamba. This mix is sold in many garden centers under various trade names. Applications in late October through November, after winter annuals have emerged, often result in better control of winter annual broadleaves and perennial broadleaves compared to spring applications. Make the application on a warm day, sometime after the first frost of the season.

Renovate – Summer's stresses often take a toll on your lawn. The best time to reseed your lawn is from late August through October. Because the goal is to get the seed in close contact with the soil, it is recommended that you first remove surface debris and mechanically groove the soil. This can be easily done by traversing the lawn with a dethatching machine that can be rented at many rental centers. Seed a turf-type tall fescue at a rate of five to six pounds per 1,000 square feet. To avoid uneven application, spread half the seed horizontally across the lawn and the other half vertically. The best and quickest results are obtained if the seeded areas can be kept moist until the seeds germinate.

Remember to continue mowing your lawn as long as the grass is growing. You might want to lower the height in the fall to 1.5 to 2 inches. This tends to keep the grass greener longer in the winter and will help the lawn to green up earlier next spring. It might even help increase turf density.

For more information, contact the McCracken County Cooperative Extension office.



Kissing Bugs & Chagas in Kentucky?

Fast Facts



- KY has a local "kissing bug" called the **eastern bloodsucking conenose** (pictured above)
- This insect is **not good** at transmitting the parasites that cause Chagas disease
- There is **low risk** for contracting Chagas in KY
- For more tips and tricks 
<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef655>

Look alikes

Pointy "wheel" on their thorax

Flattened legs like an oar or paddle

Wheel bugs



Western conifer seed bugs



Brown marmorated stink bugs



Lighter brown color than conenoses

This week, several agents have reached out and said that local clients are asking for help with kissing bug identification or asking if UK will test insects for Chagas disease. In short, the department is not seeking to test these insects for Chagas. As with all specimens, you can mail them in for identification or send photos through email if you prefer a speedier response. We do have a species of kissing bug that calls the commonwealth home, the eastern bloodsucking conenose. These can bite humans but are most commonly associated with pets or wildlife. Past testing has demonstrated that the pathogen responsible for Chagas disease can be found in this species, but due to behavioral differences with the kissing bugs of Central and South America, our local conenose is not a reliable vector for the pathogen. The other species feed and defecate in the same location on their host (often on the face, lending the name "kissing bug"). This behavior leads to transmission of the Chagas parasite. If you would like to have a factsheet to refer to or print out, here is EF655

<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef655>



FOR-177

A close-up photograph of a pink, feathery flower, likely a Mimulus, with numerous long, thin stamens extending from a yellow center. The background is dark and out of focus.

FIELD GUIDE TO KENTUCKY'S INVASIVE PLANTS



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How Dry Seasons Affect Woody Plants (ID-89)

Dry seasons and drought conditions not only have a short-term impact on woody plants in the form of wilting, but dry conditions can also result in long-term damage evident over subsequent years. Moreover, periods of extreme or repeated drought conditions can cause permanent damage, resulting in plant decline and death.

This publication provides a summary of the process of water uptake in plants and then presents the types of symptoms that are often evident on drought-stressed plants. The long- and short-term effects of drought, plant care during dry seasons, and selecting drought-tolerant plants are also discussed. How Dry Seasons Affect Woody Plants (ID-89) is available online. For additional publications on woody plant diseases, visit the [UK Plant Pathology Extension Publications](http://www.ukplantpathologyextension.org) webpage.

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(ID-89)



How Dry Seasons Affect Woody Plants

Nicole Ward Gauthier, Plant Pathology, and Susan Fox and Kathy Winkler, Horticulture

Patterns, frequency, and amounts of rainfall are important components to plant health. Water is an essential plant component and ranges 75 percent to 90 percent of plant mass. Growth, photosynthesis, translocation of food, nutrient transport, important chemical reactions, and the production of secondary metabolites are all dependent upon water uptake from roots. Water expands and enlarges new cells within stems and leaves which leads to stem weight being constant. During dry seasons and drought conditions, plants become stressed (Figure 1). Growth ceases, nutrient transport slows, and plants wilt as cells become water deficient. Severe, long-term, or consecutive drought events may cause permanent damage.

Water Uptake in Plants

The driving force for transport of water throughout plants is transpiration. Evaporation from pores stimulates air to flow across creating a negative pressure that draws water up through plants. During periods when rainfall is scarce, low amounts can further encourage or when rainfall distribution is uneven, plant health declines. Thus, water is a vital resource for plant life.

Plant water and nutrient uptake begins at the root zone between leafy roots. Ninety percent of these roots have an 18-inch to 20-inch diameter, occur in the top 12 to 15 inches of soil, and usually extend well beyond the drip line of trees. Thus, upper layers of soils require adequate moisture for optimum water and nutrient uptake and plant health. Under hot, dry conditions, water availability may be reduced to better roots, and they can become permanently damaged. Damaged roots are unable to absorb and transport water to upper plant parts.

The physical characteristics of soils largely govern water holding capacity and availability. For example, clay and clay loam soils have high water holding capacities. Fine-textured clay soils hold much of their stored water for long periods of time. Conversely, coarse-textured soils (sandy soils) have low water holding capacities and require plant available water. These coarse-textured soils cannot store enough water to last longer than a few days after rain or irrigation.



Figure 1. Plant loss during drought reduces the amount of water and nutrients taken up by roots and thereby stresses existing stems and branches.

Compacted soils have lower water holding capacities than non-compacted soils. Where a given volume of soil is compacted, and particles are crushed together and pore space reduced, the heavy, reflective traffic, and even human or animal traffic, can cause compaction, especially when with an mold or wet. Plants in compacted soils often suffer from drought conditions.



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