

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Natural Season Garden Mum Finishing Tips

Mark Smith



Garden mums finishing may stay consistent year to year ... your local weather conditions won't. Syngenta Flowers is staying on top of any new tips for finishing garden mums no matter the condition.

Pictured: New from Syngenta for 2016 is Beverly Bronze.

Water

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

Fertilizer

Fertilizer can help drive plant growth. Ammonium sources of nitrogen are good for keeping plants actively growing. This may be helpful at the beginning of the crop, but isn't wanted at the end of the 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, a 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. Although B-Nine is often used early in the crop, once the plants have started to initiate flower buds, B-Nine plant growth regulator sprays can make the plants flower later than expected. Unlike B-Nine sprays, Bonzi plant growth regulator drenches at low concentrations can control growth with little to no effect on flower timing. This can be used to prevent plants from overgrowing their space before delivery.

Insects and diseases

Continue to scout the crop regularly for signs of pests and disease problems. Two-spotted spider mites and caterpillars can become a problem late in the crop. Proper monitoring is the best solution to detect these insects. It's also important to monitor thrips populations, particularly when flower buds begin to crack color. Sprays of Avid and Conserve insecticides can be applied at this stage for thrips control.

Root, stem and foliar diseases can develop during the mid/late stages of production. Summer weather and salt build-up in the media can stress the roots and increase the opportunity for disease to start. A drench using Subdue Maxx, Segway or Truban, plus Medallion fungicides, 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., spraying applications of Daconil Ultrex or Daconil Weatherstik (prior to bloom) and Heritage fungicides 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 will be needed depending on the weather condition throughout the crop cycle. Keeping good notes will help you to make a better plan for the next year, as well as allow you to make adjustments 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 on an as-needed basis. **GT**

Mark Smith is Technical Service Lead for Syngenta Flowers.