

"If you would be happy for a lifetime, grow chrysanthemums." (a Chinese philosopher)

It is difficult to imagine autumn without chrysanthemums, and they are the dominant flower in the fall floral display at the Domes. People around the world grow mums. They were first cultivated in China and described in writings as early as the 15th Century B.C. Around the 8th century A.D., the chrysanthemum appeared in Japan. The Japanese include a single flowered chrysanthemum as the crest and official seal of the Emperor and celebrate a National Chrysanthemum Day, which is called the Festival of Happiness. Although mums are used on many happy occasions in the U.S.- homecoming corsages and table centerpieces- they are used only in cemeteries in some European countries where mums are considered a death flower. Some chrysanthemum species contain natural insecticides called pyrethrums. Most of the world's supply is derived from two species grown commercially in Kenya. Synthetic pyrethroids have been developed and are sold in garden stores. Most of these compounds are effective insecticides with low toxicity for people.

The chrysanthemum was first introduced into the Western world during the 17th Century. The name is from Greek words *chrysos*, meaning gold with *antheon*, meaning flower. The earliest illustrations of mums show them as small, yellow daisy-like flowers because mums belong to the aster or daisy (composite) family of plants. Not only do we have far showier flowers to choose from today, but we also can find a wide variety of autumn colors including white, yellow, bronze, orange, pink, and deep maroon.

Each chrysanthemum flower is really a collection of hundreds of tiny individual flowers called florets. In the daisy type mums, the ray florets are around the outside edge and include a petal, and the disk florets are in the center. Plant breeders have crossed and recrossed many kinds of mums to produce 13 different classifications of flowers many of which look nothing like the original daisy-type flower. You can see photographs of all of these different kinds in the Chrysanthemum Society's webpage: <http://www.mums.org/> . See how many different kinds of mums you can see in the Domes display this fall.