



ask the landscape professional

Celebrating 21 Years!
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
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**Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs
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Question this Week:

Hi Linda- In November, I took a trip to Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and saw this beautiful flower. Can you tell me something about it? Thank you ...Mary

Linda's Answer:

Hello Mary – thank you for a great question. Every fall, it seems like we get inundated with chrysanthemums (nicknamed “mums”) that are for sale in every garden center, food store and box store. I find these “garden mums” rather monotonous. Surprisingly, it turns out that mums are really exciting plants with hundreds of beautiful varieties. There is such a wide range of different chrysanthemum blooms, to keep them all straight, the National Chrysanthemum Society has divided their shapes into 13 different classes. Your picture shows a beautiful “spider mum”, which is one of the more unusual chrysanthemums that comes in a wide range of different colors and looks like fireworks. At first glance, the bloom shown in your picture may look like one flower, but it is actually hundreds of individual flowers called “florets”. Spider mums get their name from their florets that are tube-like and freely float (like spider legs). Spider mums are one of many types of beautiful chrysanthemums that are called exhibition mums and require quite a lot of care to grow. While they are able to grow outdoors in Zones 5 through 9 (which includes our area-Zone 6) they do require extra care to protect them from the freezing and thawing cycles that we experience. They are late bloomers (October-November) and because of that, you normally won't find them at local garden centers. You will need to locate them on-line from a specialty grower who will send you rooted cuttings and will advise you with planting and care instructions. One of the biggest differences in the care of garden mums and spider mums is the pruning required. For garden mums, the more you cut them back, the more side branches and flowers result. With spider mums, you actually do just the opposite, called “disbudding”, where you remove many of the buds that form to concentrate the plant's energy on a single (or several buds). Spider mums can grow 6 inches wide and one of the reasons they are so popular is that the cut flowers can last up to 3 weeks.



Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 21 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.

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