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Two Mums to Choose From by Lydia Holley

There seems to be two different views on the full-flowering, colorful chrysanthemums that are popularly sold this time of year. Some gardeners feel that the abundance of blooms and bright colors make these plants look artificial. "Fake! Plastic!" are the words generally used to describe these plants by those that hold this view.



If you have that same point of view, then you will be delighted to know there is a chrysanthemum that does not have that rigidity to its form. County Girl mum, considered an heirloom mum, has foliage that is much looser than the mums you find proudly displayed at the nurseries in autumn. Its pink blooms are sweetly scattered. County Girl mums can easily blend into a cottage-style garden, frolicking among other relaxed plantings.

County girl chrysanthemums are not often easy to find for sale. The Henderson County Master Gardener plant sale occasionally has them available. These chrysanthemums do best when planted in spring, to give time for their roots to grow.

Other gardeners, however, take the opposing point of view. They love the compact, rounded bouquet of a chrysanthemum in full bloom. They are easy to use in pots, and many will discard the plant after its show is over. Some florist chrysanthemums are not hardy, however, most chrysanthemums you see for sale in garden centers now are hardy, and are labeled as either hardy mums or as garden mums. These can be planted in the ground as a returning perennial.

I have to admit that I love both the full, half-ball chrysanthemums as well as the more relaxed County Girl mums, although planted in different areas of my garden. One reason I love hardy mums is sentimental. This was one of the first plants I ever put in the ground, and not knowing much about gardening at the time, I was amazed and pleased that they returned the next spring. I suppose I felt some sense of success, and my love for gardening was born.

Hardy chrysanthemums can be planted under taller plants, where they will give you a fabulous display of fall color each year. They will eventually spread and lose that tight, rounded form. They can also be planted under a low window, as a front edging plant, or, if you prefer your chrysanthemums to retain a rounded shape, be kept in a potted container.

There is no reason not to have chrysanthemums in your garden. You just have to plant a mum which fits in best with your garden style.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.