Chrysanthemums, often referred to as ‘mums,’ are among the most popular flowers for autumn plantings and landscape decor. But these hardy, often vividly colored plants are worth of attention as early as the spring gardening season.

Although mums are most often purchased in September and October and cast aside shortly thereafter, the plant that many people mistake for an annual is actually a perennial—meaning with the proper care it can come back year after year. By planting mums in the spring, gardeners ensure the plants have enough time to develop solid root systems, including their hallmark underground runners that enable them to grow tall and wide and over-winter. While it’s best to plant pot ted mums that were used in fall decorating after the flow ers die and before winter sets in, some container plants can still thrive and come back the following year. When cleaning gardens in the spring, do not trash withered mums that may have been stabbed behind the shed. Try planting them and you may be sur prised that they thrive and re bloom in the garden this year. Remove the dead branches and dried-up parts of the plant only after new shoots begin to grow.

Gardening experts advise planning mums in sunny spots with southern exposure. However, be sure to keep the plants away from artificial lighting, such as streetlamps or garden accent lighting, as mums are Short-day plants that bloom only when the hours of darkness are greater than the hours of daylight. Mums that get too much light at night may not bloom to their fullest capacity, or they may be ‘leggy’ with longer stems instead of being compact. Pruning ‘or pinching’ mums in June and July will help keep mums compact as well, resulting in more flow ers.

Mums desire a rich and well-drained soil. Planted mums will require less water than container plants but the ground should never become soggy. Well watered plants will offer more flowers.

Hardy mums work well as edging, in mass groupings to create a shrub-like appearance and even in containers. Thanks to their relative affordability, mums are an inex pen sive way to dress up land scapes. Mums are hardy in USDA zones five through nine.

Although fall-flowering mums may not be the first plants to come to gardeners’ minds at the onset of spring, planting chrysanthemum landscaping now can help ensure beautiful plants when spring and summer flowers begin to wither.

Chrysanthemums not Exclusive to Fall

Well known for bringing color to autumn landscapes, mums actually are a perennial that can be planted in spring to come back each year.