

Tale from the Garden!

As well as autumn foliage, there are beautiful flowering plants to admire in November. November in the garden doesn't necessarily mean browns and no interest. In fact, there are a host of November flowers and plants that are in their element this month, which can provide structure, support for the wildlife and lots and lots of stunning colour.

And what with the bright mornings that appear with more regularity as the season progresses, we all know that autumn can be one of the most colourful months of the year. One of the most beautiful of plants to help cheer you up and bring warmth to your outside space is the Chrysanthemum.

Chrysanthemums, also known as 'mums', are admired for their radiant blooms.

Looking like daisies with a yellow core and an ornamental pompom, chrysanthemum is a symbol of optimism and joy. Just as there is a specific zodiac sign to signify the month you were born in, there is also a certain flower that celebrates your birthday month. And, with the arrival of the cold breezes that sweep past your face in November, the November birth flower is the heavenly & vibrant Chrysanthemum. It is also the 13th wedding anniversary!

When autumn rolls in, most of the flowers in our gardens are dying off, but the chrysanthemum is just beginning to bloom. Found in an array of colours from whites and purples to bright yellows and reds to rustic oranges and browns, the chrysanthemum is a popular fall flower, and has a rich history of folklore and myth behind it.



Legends of the Chrysanthemum:

With the arrival of cooler weather, many gardeners turn to fall chrysanthemums to provide colour for the spots left vacant by tired summer annuals. What most don't realize is that they are planting a species whose relatives go back centuries, even millennia, and whose origins are buried in legends.

- ✚ Chrysanthemums are said to have first come from China although they are more often associated with Japan. According to an ancient Chinese legend, about 3,000 years ago, an emperor was told that the Dragon-fly Island in the Sunrise Sea (Japan) had a magic herb that would restore his youth. But since only young people could collect it, he sent 24 children to the island. They arrived at the islands after surviving perilous storms and attacks by sea serpents & finding neither magic herb nor inhabitants on the island, they decided to stay. The prized possession they brought with them for trading, should they find the magic herb, was the golden chrysanthemum & this they nurtured as a tie with, & reminder of, their homeland.
- ✚ Of course, Japanese mythology provides a different version of how the chrysanthemum came to be found in Japan. Legend has it that in the beginning, there were so many gods in heaven that some, including the god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami, were sent to the earth on a cloud-bridge. Once on earth, the goddess Izanami created the gods of the winds, mountains, sea, and others, finally dying upon creating the god of fire. Izanagi missed Izanami and so followed her to the place of Black Night where she had gone, only to see vile sights and be pursued by the Old Hag of Black Night. Narrowly escaping back to the earth, the god Izanagi went straight to the river for a purification bath. As he shed his clothes and as they touched the ground, they turned into twelve gods. His jewels became flowers--one bracelet an iris, another a lotus, and his necklace a golden chrysanthemum.
- ✚ Japan's imperial emblem for ten centuries featured a golden chrysanthemum with sixteen petals. In the War of Dynasties, which began in 1357 and lasted for 55 years, each warrior of the South wore a yellow chrysanthemum as a golden badge of courage. The highest honour in Japan is the Order of Chrysanthemum. It can only be found very exceptionally and exclusively

among the most famous personalities, the ones who have given an outstanding legacy to the Japanese people! Moreover, the flower's symbol can be seen on important government documents such as the passport of a Japanese citizen.

- ✚ In Japan, they even have a "Festival of Happiness" celebrated annually for it. The Japanese consider it a symbol of the sun. They see the correct arrangement of chrysanthemum petals as representing perfection, while Confucius proposed that it should be kept as an item for practice and meditation.
- ✚ There is only one place in Japan, according to legend, where the chrysanthemum is not grown. Long ago in the city of Himeji, a nobleman lived in a large castle with many treasures. Trusting no one, he allowed only his serving maid O-kiku, whose name means 'chrysanthemum', to handle and dust his possessions. One day she discovered one of his ten precious plates was missing. Not being able to find it, and fearing she would be blamed, she drowned herself in the well. Every night her ghost would come up out of the well to count the plates. Her repeated screeching upon finding one missing drove the nobleman out of the castle, which then fell into ruin. The people of Himeji, delighted by his departure, refused thereafter to grow the chrysanthemum in honour of O-kiku.
- ✚ The word "chrysanthemum" comes from the Greek words meaning "golden (chrysos) flower (anthemon)," but a German legend refers to another of the many colours of chrysanthemums. One cold, snowy Christmas Eve in Germany's Black Forest, a peasant family was sitting down to a meagre supper when they heard a wailing. At first, they thought it was the wind. But upon hearing the sound repeatedly, they opened the door and found a beggar. They ushered in the poor man who was blue with cold, wrapped him in blankets, and shared their food. Instantly, the blankets were shed, revealing a man in shining white clothing with a halo around his head. Proclaiming himself the Christ Child he fled. The next morning, outside the door where he had stood, were two white chrysanthemums. Today, many Germans bring white chrysanthemums into their homes on Christmas Eve, believing that by doing so they are sheltering the Christ Child.

So, when you see chrysanthemums in gardens this fall, think of these rich legends from other cultures. And mark your calendar now to remind yourself to buy some white chrysanthemum cut flowers or a potted plant this Christmas season.

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