

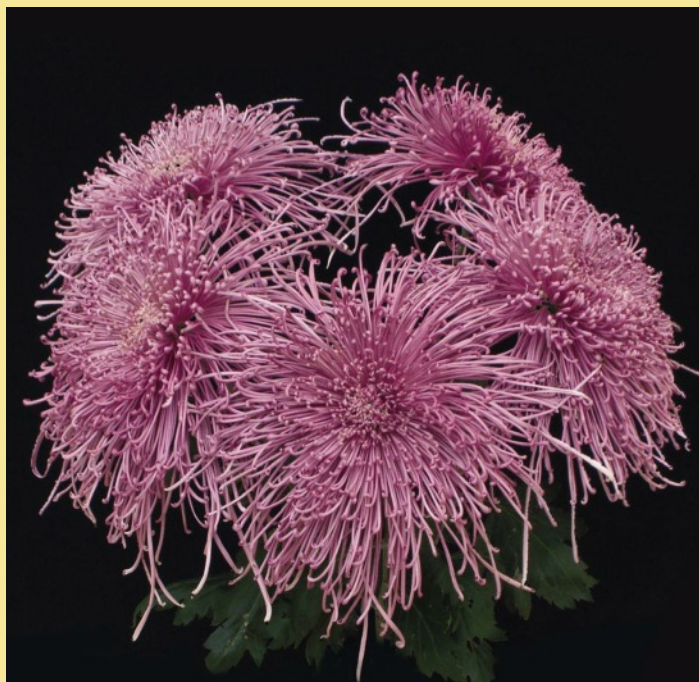
Blooming Great Daisies

THINK of 'Daisy' and you'll probably think: small, white with yellow centre, grows in lawn, in Spring, weed. Expand this a little and you might add: African Daisy (*Arctotis*), Gerbera, or Shasta Daisy – they all look a bit the same. Seeking further information on these may throw up 'Chrysanthemum' – now there's a tricky word to spell, but easy plant to find at the supermarket or garden centre. Yes, it too can be called a 'daisy': fairly small, various colours and styles, grows in pot, all seasons, cultivated plant. However, you probably don't know much about its big sister the **Exhibition Chrysanthemum**: plants grow to around shoulder height, white and yellow and most other colours except blue (if you ever see a blue chrysanthemum you should examine what you've been imbibing), usually grown in 'buckets', flowers in autumn with blooms to 26 cm and as a cut flower will last for a good two weeks – absolutely fabulous!



Where do you see these blooms?

While some florists have sources, most Exhibition Chrysanthemums are grown by enthusiastic home gardeners. The only time the public see the outcome of their labours is at local Society shows or at National shows. These are big occasions where growers can hone their competitive skills and visitors feast their eyes.



What can you expect to see?

Anyone who is concerned about genetic modification should note that without such modification present day blooms would be similar in size to the lawn daisy and yellow. The original plants were a native of China, subsequently introduced into Japan where it is the national flower. With the tea trade developing in the 17th century, the plant was brought back to Europe where much of the modification was undertaken. After a couple of centuries of hybridisation, the basic range of modern chrysanthemums was established. Today, this process continues in a search to produce new varieties (cultivars) that are more visually interesting, are more resistant to disease and generally stronger plants.

Within New Zealand contact:

National Secretary NZNCS

chrys.secretary@outlook.com

<http://www.chrysanthemums.info/nz/>

For show purposes the Autumn flowering blooms (there are others that flower earlier) are divided into Sections starting with the biggest blooms, Large Exhibition, each a huge heap of small curved petals overall about 20 cm across. Two sections where blooms are smaller follow before the next section catering for slightly smaller blooms that have petals that turn down, Reflex Decorative. Yes, there is a section for blooms with petals that turn up, and petals that can't make their mind up which way to go and turn both up and down! The nearest bloom to the original simple daisy has its section, Single, and its mate with a domed centre, Anemone Centred. One spectacular section has long thin petals like the strings of an old-style floor mop held upright, Fantasy – always a crowd pleaser. There are other sections with further variations. Within Sections, each variety has its name, for example, in Section 1 we have *Bill Fitton* which is light bronze; Section 4 the Reflexing, *Folk Song*; in New Zealand, the most grown in Section 7, Single, is *Glad Eye*; and in Section 8, Fantasy, is *Wind Chimes* that goes to 24 cm across!





At a show, these blooms are in vases around 22 cm high – big blooms are one to a vase, smaller three. The real test is the five blooms to a vase class.– imagine trying to stuff five floor mops into one vase.

Most of the illustrations of these Sections are from the New Zealand North Island National Show 2007.

How to Grow Exhibition Chrysanthemums

Anyone who grows tomatoes can grow Exhibition Chrysanthemums – they need plenty of ‘food’, staking, and spraying for fungus and insects, and a fair measure of patience. They are grown from cuttings taken from shoots arising from the ‘soil’ at the base of a stock plant. Late Spring is the best time. These are about 6 cm long and should be dipped in liquid rooting compound before inserting in either sand or a mixture of sand and potting mix. Spray the cutting with a fungicide. The container can be a tray or pot. Either way, it should be sealed inside a plastic bag left in bright light.

Inspect progress and moisten the ‘sand’ if necessary. After three weeks, a small hole can be made to let in air, and after another week, the bag can be eased off. If all has gone well, you have a new plant!

With potting mix plus a little sand and slow-release fertiliser, the young plant is then moved to a new pot about 12 cm across and left in shade. Then after a week to settle, gradually moved to full sun.

After another month or so, the plant can be re-potted into its final container that is a plastic ‘bucket’ (orchid planter), plastic bag, or ceramic pot. Use potting mix plus slow-release fertiliser.

To force the plant to make side shoots, it is necessary to nip out the growing tip when the plant is about 20 cm high – this is often repeated four to six weeks later. The aim is to produce four or so strong near vertical shoots/branches.



Flower buds appear in late Summer. It is necessary to select the best on each stem and remove the rest and any others that pop up later. By mid-Autumn you should have, say, four half-open buds sitting at the top of each stem. At this stage the plant needs to be repositioned out

of any rain.

If all goes well, four beautiful blooms should be fully out by late Autumn.

You can cut and enjoy these, or give to friends, and either way feel pleased about how clever and patient you are. You could enter them in a local show and if successful feel especially pleased by proving how very skilful and very patient you are!

Do go to your local Show – you’ll see some ‘Blooming Great Daisies’!

LOCAL CLUB DETAILS

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM

