

Autumn in bloom at mum farm

By Bonnie Szymanski
 "We killed them with kindness," said Harold Kreider, Lititz R2, as he spoke with us recently at his Mum Farm along Lexington Road, just off Route 501 north.

He was referring to the first batch of mums he and his wife, Esther, had attempted to raise. Now experts in the art of the care

and cultivation of the little fall flowers, the Kreiders hold out hope and advice to those who can't get their mums to respond to even the greenest of thumbs.

"We started (this farm) with one plant," he continued, noting that it was the only one which survived that first unfortunate season. As we surveyed the mum-filled acres, we were assured that the popular chrysan-

themums were not only colorful but prolific as well.

"One twig is enough to start a full plant, according to Kreider; in fact, he warns, just thinning the full grown plants will not insure "nice" mums for the following season. Mums should be dug up completely, separated at the roots and transplanted.

Said our expert, if the plants become "over-populated", the blooms will



"Disbudding" the football mums to make certain they will bloom full and colorful is one of the many little chores carried out at this time of the year by Harold Kreider, owner of Kreider's Mum Farm, Lititz R2. "There's not much in the books (about raising mums)," he said and admitted that most of his knowledge comes from years of experience with the flowers. Over 300 varieties of chrysanthemums are raised on the farm and Kreider knows the name of each kind. In the process of testing about 40 new varieties now, he said it takes time to learn them all by sight and finds the ones that do the best are the easiest to remember.



Linda Kreider searches through a large bundle of dark red 'cock's combs' to find the right one for the dried arrangement she is making. A

graduate of Brownstown Vo-Tech where she studied flower arranging, Linda creates most of the dried arrangements sold at the mum farm.

be small it takes a strong plant, started from a single root system or cutting to produce the full pom-poms so dearly admired by chrysanthemum lovers.

Hearty Plants

"There are two secrets to wintering mums," confided Kreider. First, don't cut the plants down; the sap from the plant nourishes the root system. Second, plant them on a slope or anyplace where they will drain well. It is important, according to Kreider, that the plants "freeze dry" and are not allowed to remain in wet ground.

Mums should be cut down in the summer, though he

added, to allow for new growth and to make certain the new blooms will "hold" and be full.

Mums are not particular where they grow, either, and actually prefer an acid soil. The best fertilizer for mums, said Kreider, is good old-fashioned manure. Commercial fertilizers, although basically good, are often used too heavily in which case the plants are in danger of chemical burning.

Commercial fertilizers, he warned, can also force mums to grow too quickly and bloom before their time. It seems that mums, though not particular about where

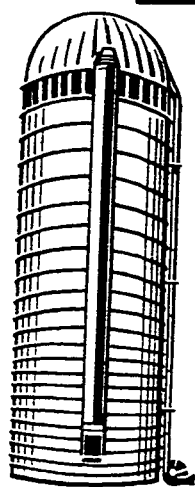
they grow, are very choosy about when they grow and fare well only when allowed to show their colorful faces according to their own natural time-clocks. (With the exception of greenhouse blooms.)

Another way to "kill them with kindness," Kreider offered is to cover them with mulch for the winter. People who do so, do it with the best intentions - they want to protect their plants from the harshness of winter weather.

But, don't do it if you want to have the nicest mums on your block, says our expert. Too much protection could

(Continued on Page 75)

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