

Bluestem Breezes  
Karaline Mayer  
June 8, 2015

## **Maintaining Flower Beds**

My flower beds look terrific! The plants are thriving and the soil is moist.

We've spent the last few weeks mainly enjoying our landscape by peeking out the windows as the rains continued to pour. This week, the forecast is looking far less eventful, and that's alright with me! I am ready to spend time in my flower beds and garden playing catch-up.

Two of the tasks I am already falling behind on include the deadheading of several flowers and pinching mums. This week, K-State Specialist Ward Upham discusses both of these topics:

### **DEADHEADING FLOWERS**

Some plants will bloom more profusely if the old, spent flowers are removed, a process called deadheading. Annuals especially, focus their energy on seed production to insure that the species survives. If you remove old flowers, the energy normally used to produce seed is now available to produce more flowers. Perennials can also benefit by lengthening the blooming season. However, some gardeners enjoy the look of spent flowers of perennials such as sedum or purple coneflower. Also, the seed produced can be a good food source for birds.

Not all plants need to be deadheaded, including sedum 'Autumn Joy', melampodium, impatiens, most flowering vines, periwinkle (*Catharanthus*), and wishbone flower (*Torenia*).

Those that do increase bloom in response to deadheading include hardy geraniums, coreopsis, petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, begonias, roses, campanulas, blanket flowers, delphiniums, zinnias, sweet peas, salvia, scabiosa, annual heliotrope, geraniums (*Pelargonium*), and yarrow.

Deadheading is easily accomplished by removing spent flowers. With some plants, pinching between a thumb and finger can do this, but tough, wiry stems will require a scissors or pruning shears.

### **PINCHING MUMS**

Though some garden mums do not require pinching back, most varieties will benefit. Pinching is done by removing the top inch of growth by pinching it between your thumbnail and forefinger. Pinch to just above where a leaf is attached. Pinching encourages lateral buds to break and grow resulting in a shorter, sturdier and fuller plant.

The first pinching is usually done when the mums reach six inches in height. A second pinching should be done when the new growth from the previous pinch reaches six to eight inches. Usually that is all we have time for because the last pinch should take place before July 15.

Pinching later than that can delay flowering resulting in a shorter time of flowering before frost kills the blooms.

For any additional information, visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; [kamayer@ksu.edu](mailto:kamayer@ksu.edu); 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out [wabaunsee.ksu.edu](http://wabaunsee.ksu.edu).