

A *FED* WET MUM IS BETTER THAN A *HUNGRY* WET MUM

When you experience heavy rains, it's essential to focus on proper irrigation and fertilization practices for outdoor mums.



When it rains, the relatively pure, low electrical conductivity (EC) rainwater displaces the nutrient charge in the substrate from prior fertilization. This leaves the substrate fully saturated with virtually no mineral nutrition for the plant to take up, and it can take days for the substrate to dry down enough for the next irrigation. *However, leaving mums wet and hungry for several days is a dangerous combination, so consider this tactic that may go against your better judgement as a grower.*

After a heavy rain event, immediately fertilize your mums to displace the low EC rainwater with the mineral nutrition they need to keep growing. This may seem counterintuitive, but if the substrate is already fully saturated, you're not adding water, but rather displacing the water with nutrients.

Another benefit of fertilizing immediately after rainfall is preventing the pH from creeping up. High substrate pH values often follow heavy rain, but adding a fertilizer, especially from an acidic formulation like 20-10-20, will help maintain optimal pH levels and prevent common symptoms of upper leaf chlorosis that accompany high substrate pH caused by iron (Fe) deficiency.

Some of you opt to use controlled release fertilizers (CRFs), either incorporated into the substrate or topdressed after transplanting. These fertilizers provide a constant stream of nutrients into the substrate even after heavy rain, which helps maintain EC. *However, CRFs alone likely cannot replenish nutrients as quickly as necessary following a heavy rain event, so growers using CRFs should still consider applying water-soluble fertilizer after rain.*

Here are a few pro tips for success:

- **Fertilize after rain.** Persistent rain on outdoor mums flushes available nutrients from the substrate, so it is essential to replace those nutrients quickly to maintain growth.
- **A note on CRFs.** For CRF users, replenishing nutrients with water-soluble fertilizer is critical to prevent nutrient stress, which can lead to crown budding.
- **For outdoor production.** Remember that a wet, well-fed mum is better than a wet, hungry mum. After any heavy rain event, be sure to pump your crops back up with feed, but also monitor root health and utilize a good fungicide rotation to prevent root rot.
- **For greenhouse production.** Indoor growing means there will be no rain flushing nutrients out of your pots; however, prolonged low light and high humidity will reduce nutrient uptake, so monitor substrate EC and reduce your feed slightly to avoid root burn.