

***Chrysanthemum: What's the Story?***

Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect—that is, until she starts school. Her new classmates tease her about it, and her teacher ignores Chrysanthemum's hurt feelings. Chrysanthemum's self-confidence wilts, and life becomes absolutely dreadful. Finally, a sensitive music teacher, admired for her unique flair, turns the situation around by sharing her own distinctive first name. Now Chrysanthemum is the envy of her classmates. With humor and a pinch of sweet revenge, this book spotlights the small cruelties that thrive among children unless grown-ups actively strive to create a climate that values the unique and different.



Guide for  
**Chrysanthemum**

by Kevin Henkes



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### A NOTE ABOUT JOURNALS

A personal journal is the perfect place for kids to gather their drawings, ideas, questions, and new words. We suggest that you have a journal for each child—an AfterSchool KidzLit journal or a journal each child has made and decorated for himself.

**The purpose of this program** is simple—to help you build a love of reading and strong relationships at your site. You don’t have to be a trained teacher or a literature expert to be a successful AfterSchool KidzLit leader. All you have to do is enjoy kids and reading.

**Always read the book and its AfterSchool KidzLit Guide before your session with the kids.** Decide which activities and discussions are best suited to your group and the time you have available.

**Look to your “QuickTips” handbook** for additional activities and ideas for organizing and planning your sessions. It’s packed with helpful suggestions, information, games, and projects.

**Remember that reading is its own reward.** Through books, all of us make connections to stories and their characters, to our own lives, to each other, and to the world. So make yourself comfortable, pick up a good book, and have fun!

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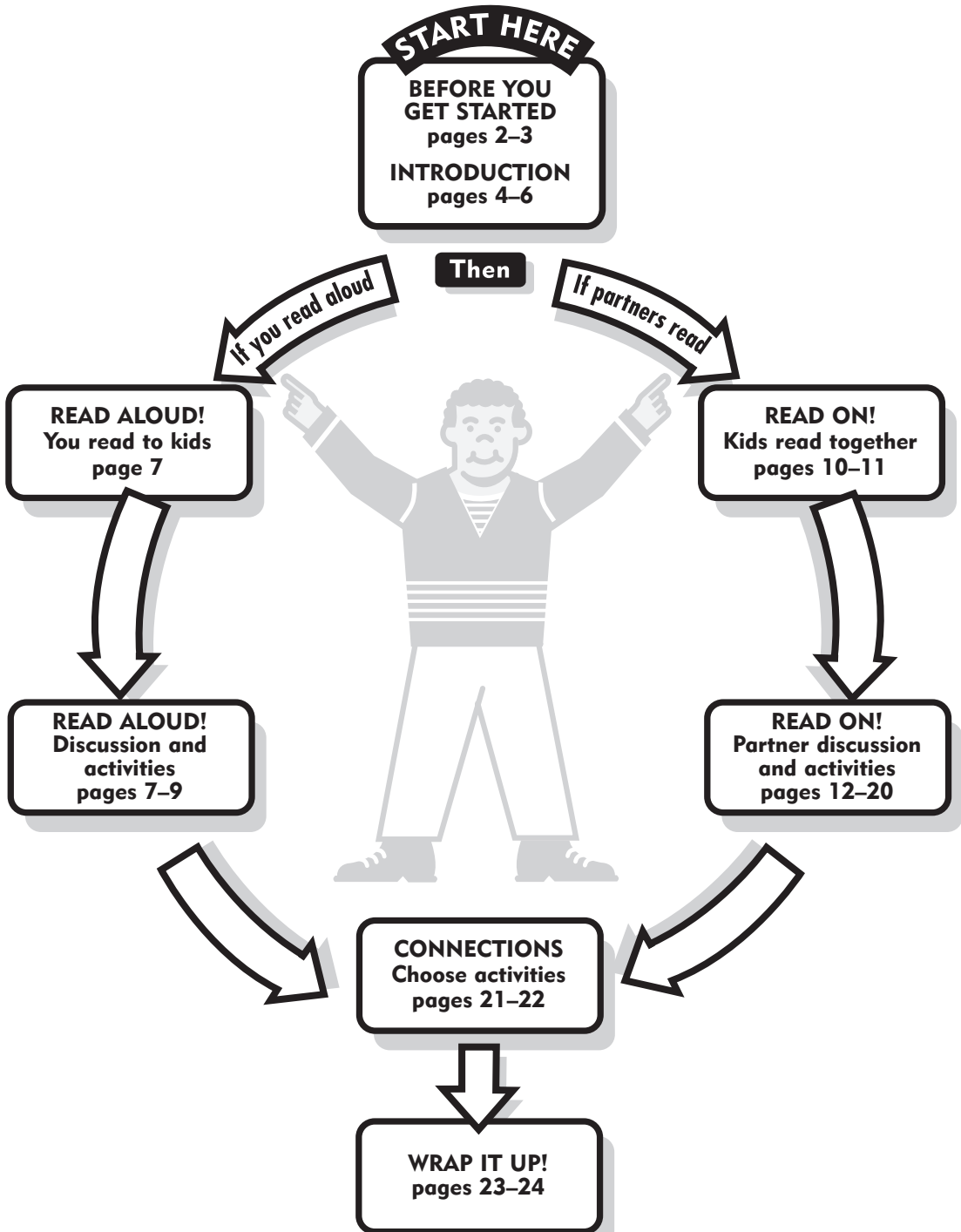
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# CHOOSE A DIRECTION | How to Use This Guide



# BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

- ▶ Read through “What’s the Story?” and “Some Big Ideas” for an overview of the book and themes emphasized in discussions and activities. You and the kids may discover others.

## NOTE

*Chrysanthemum* does not have page numbers. You may want to write them in, starting with the title page.

## What’s the Story?

Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect—that is, until she starts school. Her new classmates tease her about it, and her teacher ignores Chrysanthemum’s hurt feelings. Chrysanthemum’s self-confidence wilts, and life becomes absolutely dreadful. Finally, a sensitive music teacher, admired for her unique flair, turns the situation around by sharing her own distinctive first name. Now Chrysanthemum is the envy of her classmates. With humor and a pinch of sweet revenge, this book spotlights the small cruelties that thrive among children unless grown-ups actively strive to create a climate that values the unique and different.

## Heads Up!

- **Timing:** This is a great book for launching a new year/group. Use it to help kids learn (and celebrate!) one another’s names and to create a climate that values diversity.
- **Language:** The author uses repetition and variation very effectively in this book. Help the group identify lines that are repeated or varied and think about how they indicate changes in a character’s feelings or in the situation. For example, the repetition of the main character’s name, “Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum,” is transformed from a welcome melody into a hurtful taunt. Slight modifications in lines that are repeated also signal changes in the meaning.

- **Humor:** Help the kids notice and appreciate the interplay of the book’s language and illustrations. For example, the story plays with phrases associated with flowers in describing the main character: “Chrysanthemum wilted” and “She bloomed.” Illustrations like the flower picture on Chrysanthemum’s baby blanket play with this idea as well.
- **Reading Level:** This story includes many words that beginning readers may not be able to read or understand, including the main character’s name. You may want to pair older and younger readers.



## Some Big Ideas Suggested by the Story

### Intergenerational Relationships

- Children depend on adults for guidance.
- Children learn from what adults say and do and from what they fail to say and do.
- Adults have a deeper influence over children who admire and respect them.

### Identity and Self-Respect

- Our names are an intimate part of who we are.
- Peers have a powerful influence on how kids view themselves.

### The Power of Words

- Words can hurt and sometimes heal.
- A word’s meaning changes depending on how it is used.

- ▶ Lead an introductory activity (or two) to build curiosity and excitement about the story. An introduction warms the kids up to the characters and ideas they will encounter and gives them a chance to build on what they know from their own life experiences.

## I Love the Look of You

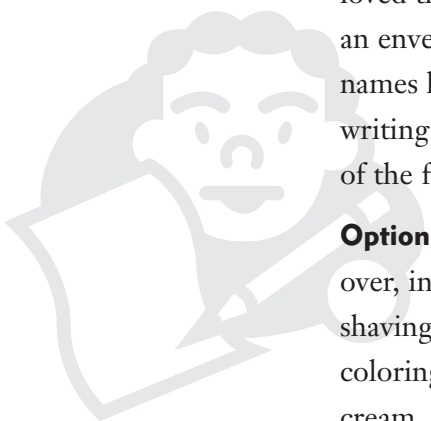
15 minutes

**Individual Writing:** Read the page that begins, “Chrysanthemum loved the way her name looked when it was written with ink on an envelope” (p. 5). Ask the kids how they feel when they see their names handwritten or printed. Invite them to experiment with writing their names in familiar and creative ways. Use one or more of the following options.

**Option 1:** Have the kids practice writing their names—over and over, in a variety of ways—in shaving cream. Squirt a small mound of shaving cream directly on a clean table for each of the kids. Add food coloring, if desired. Have them write their names using the shaving cream. (It will wipe right off when the activity is over, and your table will be cleaner than ever!) Ask the kids to notice which ways of writing their names appeal to them most.

**Option 2:** Have the kids write their names over and over on a piece of paper using different writing implements (pencils, pens, crayons, paintbrushes), styles, sizes, colors, and patterns.

**Option 3:** To add a three-dimensional element, have the kids form their names out of beans or other small objects glued to thin cardboard.



# The Sound of a Name

15 minutes

**Experiments with Word Sounds:** Tell the kids that this is a story about a girl named Chrysanthemum who loves the way her name sounds, especially when her loving parents call her. Invite the kids to experiment with different ways of saying their names. Demonstrate variations on your own name, using some of the ideas listed below. Invite the group to brainstorm other variations. (If you are working indoors, you may want to set some guidelines for volume!)

## OPTION

Have the kids interpret their names with dance or hand movements.

- Whisper it.
- Say each letter separately (e.g., S [pause] A [pause] M).
- Repeat part of it over and over.
- Stretch it.
- Repeat it over and over quickly or slowly.
- Accent, lengthen, or shorten different syllables (you may need to help younger children identify the syllables in their names).
- Sing or chant it.

Have the kids experiment with different ways of saying their names to a partner. Then have them introduce themselves to the group using their favorite way of saying their name.

# First Word

15 minutes

**Individual Sharing:** Begin a discussion of names using the following questions:

- Why is a person's name often the first word he or she learns to read and write?
- Why is it important or useful to read and write your name?
- How do people feel about their names (or nicknames)? Why do they feel that way?

Invite the children to share stories about their names—e.g., learning to say it or write it, a funny pronunciation by a younger sibling, or how they got their nicknames. (As always, be sure to share your own story—to jump-start the conversation, increase the diversity of responses, or just to help the kids get to know you better.)





- Use this section only if you are reading aloud to the whole group. For kids reading with kids, use the “Read On!” pages at the back of this guide.

**Note:** You may want to introduce “Cool Words” before reading.



## Reading

30–40 minutes

Read the book aloud to your group, pausing occasionally for the children’s comments and questions about the story, its illustrations, or words they don’t know.



## Talk It Over

Give the kids a chance to react and then ask some of the questions suggested below. As needed, follow up with “Why do you think that?” or “Tell us more.”

Begin with an open-ended question such as:

- Why do you think the author wrote a whole book about someone’s name?

Then lead a discussion about Chrysanthemum’s experiences with her classmates, parents, and teachers. Ask questions such as:

- Why do you think the teasing bothered Chrysanthemum so much? How did it make you feel?
- How do you feel about the way Mrs. Chud, Chrysanthemum’s parents, and Mrs. Twinkle handled the situation?
  - What might have happened if they had acted differently?



See Quick Tip #3,  
“Discussion Strategies.”

- What, if anything, did Chrysanthemum learn from what happened? What makes you think that?
- What, if anything, do you think Victoria, Rita, and Jo learned from what happened? What makes you think that?



## Try This!

Choose one

### Writing Advice

Ask the kids to think about what advice they would have given to certain characters at particular points in the story (when the teasing began, when Chrysanthemum came home the first day). Have them write their advice in the form of a letter addressed to that character. Create and post a model letter format that includes some possible complimentary closings (Sincerely or Your Friend).

### A Picture Worth a Thousand Words

Remind the kids that the words and actions of characters don't always reveal their private thoughts and feelings. Have groups of kids pose to recreate various pictures from the book. Once the characters are in position, have them take turns coming to life long enough to speak their thoughts and express their feelings. If a child simply recites the dialogue or describes what is happening in the picture, ask, "How do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is feeling about that?" or "Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ said that (or did that)?" Repeat the activity forming different pictures.



## Cool Words

Ask the kids if they remember any words that stood out in the reading. Share the following list of Cool Words (or create your own) and ask what words are new to them. Help them figure out what these words mean by rereading the original sentences and talking about their context. Invite the kids to pick words they like or want to remember and write them in the Cool Words collections in their journals.



See Quick Tip #6, "What's Cool About Words?" for more ideas on how to use vocabulary.

**absolutely** (p. 1): completely

**Chrysanthemum** (p. 2): brightly colored flower

**appreciate** (p. 3): understand something's value

**alphabet** (p. 9): set of letters in a language (there are 26 letters in the English alphabet)

**precious** (p. 11): valuable, lovable

**priceless** (p. 11): extremely valuable

**fascinating** (p. 11): extremely interesting

**winsome** (p. 11): charming

**Parcheesi** (p. 12): board game

**miserably** (p. 17): very sadly

**envious** (p. 18): wanting what belongs to someone else

**begrudging** (p. 18): disapproving

**discontented** (p. 18): unhappy with something

**jaundiced** (p. 18): negative, bitter

**trifle** (p. 19): little bit

**sprouted** (p. 20): grew leaves

**possessions** (p. 21): things that belong to someone

**Delphinium** (p. 26): showy flower

- ▶ For partner reading, cross-age buddy reading, or book clubs.



Read Quick Tip #8, “Independent and Partner Reading,” before leading a Read On! session for the first time.

## Directions to the Leader

1. Introduce the story (see page 2 of this guide).
2. Group the kids in twos or threes with one book per group. Consider starting with cross-age buddy reading—a great way for older kids to practice reading while helping younger ones.
3. Photocopy the “Read On!” pages that follow and give a set to each child or partnership. Explain how partners will use the pages to guide them.
4. Circulate as the kids read and talk, helping to refocus any who are struggling or off task as you go.
5. Reassemble the partners into one group and lead a discussion about the book and what it’s like to work in partnership.
6. Lead a “Connection” and “Wrap It Up” activity.

# Read On!

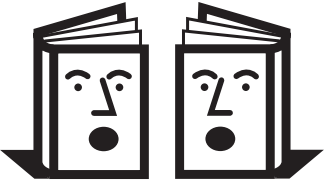


## Reading 1

20–25 minutes

Read the book together, until you finish the page showing Chrysanthemum in bed after her first day at school. The last words on the page are, “It was an extremely pleasant dream” (p. 13). If you come across new words that are important to the story, talk about their meaning together or ask a friend or leader for help.





## Talk

- Why do you think that Victoria, Rita, and Jo made fun of Chrysanthemum's name? What makes you think that?
- Why do you think that the teasing upset Chrysanthemum so much?
- How do you feel about the way Mrs. Chud handled the teasing? What, if anything, do you think she should have done? What might have happened if she'd acted differently?



## Get It Down!

Imagine that you could give advice to one of the characters in the story. What would you say? Write your advice in a letter to Chrysanthemum, Victoria, Mrs. Chud, or Chrysanthemum's parents. (Be sure to add a complimentary closing at the end and sign your name.)

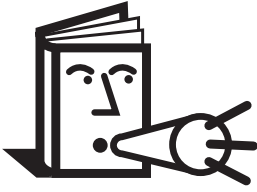
Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_ (your name)



# Try This!

## Speaking from the Heart

Take turns role-playing Chrysanthemum and Victoria in the scene where Victoria makes fun of Chrysanthemum's name. First act out the scene as it was written. Then stop and say what each character was probably thinking to herself during the scene. After you role-play the scene, talk about how it felt to be each of the characters.





# Cool Words

What words do you like and want to remember?  
Write them down in your journal or here.

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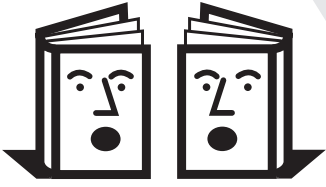
# Reading 2

20–25 minutes

Together, read to the end of the story. Remember, you can talk about new words together or ask for help.

READING IS FUN

A large, light gray, five-pointed star with a thick outline, positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.



## Talk

- How did Chrysanthemum's mother and father try to help her? Were their actions helpful? What else, if anything, do you think they should have done?
- Why did Victoria, Rita and Jo change their minds about Chrysanthemum's name? What makes you think that?
- Why do you think Mrs. Twinkle told the kids about her name instead of getting mad at them for teasing Chrysanthemum? Do you think this was a good move?
- What lesson do you think Chrysanthemum learned? What did you learn?



## Get It Down!

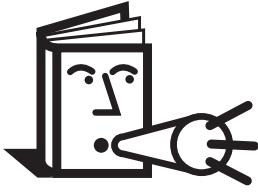
Mrs. Twinkle made a big impression on the kids. “Her voice was like something out of a dream, as was everything else about her. The students were speechless. They thought Mrs. Twinkle was an indescribable wonder. They went out of their way to make a nice impression.”

Think about a grown-up you know who is admired and respected by kids. What do they admire about this person? What does he or she do to earn kids’ respect? Describe to your partner how this person looks, sounds, and acts. Then write down three of the ideas you shared.

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# Try This!

## Mouse Clues

To create a convincing mouse world, the book's illustrator, Kevin Henkes, included many details in his pictures featuring mice instead of people (for example, the series of pictures on page 3 showing *Chrysanthemum* growing up). Go through the book with your partner and try to find other examples. Then draw a scene from the story and add your own mouse detail. For example, in a birthday scene, you might draw a cake shaped like swiss cheese. For a bedtime scene, you might show *Chrysanthemum* sleeping with a small stuffed mouse.



# Cool Words

What words do you like and want to remember?  
Write them down in your journal or here.

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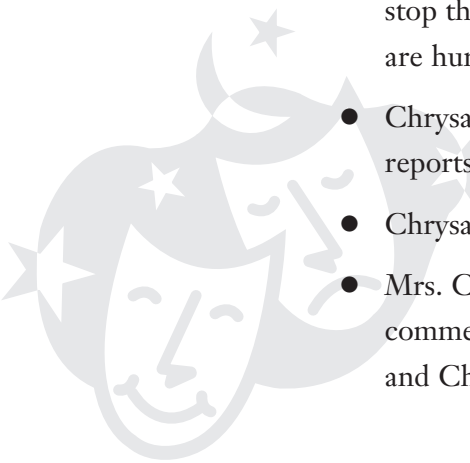
- Use connection activities after the reading to help the children take a deeper look at the story’s content and themes, the characters’ actions and motives, and how the book relates to their own lives.

## What If...

25–30 minutes

**Small-Group Role-Play:** Briefly discuss the scenes in which Chrysanthemum interacts with her parents, teachers, and classmates. Review the kids’ feelings about how the adults handled the situations and how they might have acted differently to help Chrysanthemum. Also discuss how Chrysanthemum might have acted differently. Ask the kids to form trios or small groups to create new scenes in which the characters behave differently. Brainstorm some possible “What If” scenarios. Some examples follow:

- Chrysanthemum’s parents go to Mrs. Chud and insist that she stop the teasing and talk to her class about how their comments are hurting Chrysanthemum.
- Chrysanthemum’s parents react differently to her when she first reports the teasing.
- Chrysanthemum stands up to the kids who are teasing her.
- Mrs. Chud doesn’t thank Victoria for making her unkind comments and calls a meeting to discuss the hurtful comments and Chrysanthemum’s feelings.



# Name Tags

20–30 minutes



**Individual Art Project:** Remind the kids that Chrysanthemum’s name barely fit on her name tag. Ask them to imagine they are teachers. How would they design a name tag activity that was respectful of differences in kids’ names? Invite the kids to design a name tag of a size, shape, and color that fits their name and personality. Have them personalize their name tags with designs and other decorations that describe who they are. (For example, a sparkly personality might use lots of glitter; a cat lover might glue pictures of animals on a cat-shaped name tag.) Have the kids save their name tags and use them when they want visitors to the program to know their names.

## Origins of Names

30–40 minutes (including some time at home)

**Individual Home Research:** There is usually a story behind our names. Ask the kids to interview their families to find answers to these questions about their names:

- Does my name have a meaning? What does it mean?
- Who chose my name?
- How was my name chosen?
- Why was I given my name?
- What are the stories about my middle (if given) or last name?

**Group Discussion:** Take time for kids to share whatever information they’ve collected. Discuss the benefits and burdens of having an unusual or ordinary name. Ask the kids if they think parents should give kids unusual or common names. Discuss their reasons.



- ▶ These short activities help the kids pull together and extend their thinking and learning about the story, its vocabulary, and its themes.

## Strength in Diversity

15 minutes

**Discussion:** Have each child share something that makes him or her unique. (Be sure to include yourself.) Discuss how the program benefits from the uniqueness of both the kids and the adults. List some of these benefits. Discuss how the adults and kids in your program can prevent the kinds of hurt feelings that Chrysanthemum experienced at her school and make sure that differences are respected. List some specific things everyone in the program can do to recognize and honor each child's uniqueness. Then implement some of the ideas.

## What's in the Words?

10–15 minutes

**Word Play:** Point out that the author has hidden little references, some of them humorous, to flowers in the story. Reread the story and ask the kids to listen for references to flowers. Stop and write them on the board or paper as the kids notice them. Most are listed below. Talk about the jokes and what makes them funny. (Note that humor is very personal and changes with age. Accept any responses the children give.) Point out any wordplays that the kids miss and explain what they are about (some are jokes; others are puns or taunts). If the kids seem interested, explain that a joke involving a

word with two meanings at the same time, like the word wilted in the phrase “Chrysanthemum wilted,” is called a pun.



### **Possible Plays on Words**

Chrysanthemum wilted. (pp. 8, 15, 24)

Let’s pick her. (p. 15)

Let’s smell her. (p. 15)

She sprouted leaves and petals. (p. 20)

Victoria picked her and plucked the leaves and petals until there was nothing left but a scrawny stem. (p. 20)

Chrysanthemum was chosen as a daisy. (p. 23)

Chrysanthemum’s a daisy! (p. 24)

She bloomed. (p. 27)

Call me Marigold. (p. 28)

I’m Carnation. (p. 28)

My name is Lily of the Valley. (p. 28)

Chrysanthemum was absolutely perfect as a daisy. (p. 30)

Invite the kids to share any puns and plays on words they use or hear in the coming days with the rest of the group. Encourage them to record favorite jokes in their journals.



Chrysanthemums (/krɪˈsænθəm/), sometimes called mums or chrysanthus, are flowering plants of the genus *Chrysanthemum* in the family Asteraceae. They are native to Asia and northeastern Europe. Most species originate from East Asia and the center of diversity is in China. Countless horticultural varieties and cultivars exist. The name "chrysanthemum" is derived from the Ancient Greek: χρυσός, chrysos (gold) and Ancient Greek: ἀνθέμιον, anthemon (flower). *Chrysanthemum morifolium* is Vitamin B9 and manganese rich vegetable support for Blood Pressure, Alleviate Cold Symptoms, Blood Cleansing. **Chrysanthemum Quick Facts.** Name: *Chrysanthemum*. Scientific Name: *Chrysanthemum morifolium*. Origin. China. *Chrysanthemum*. *Chrysanthemums* are some of the most popular flowers in the world, next only to the Rose. *Chrysanthemum* comes from Greek word 'Chrys' meaning golden (the color of the original flowers), and 'anthemon', meaning flower. *Chrysanthemums* have a wealth of meaning associated with them and therefore they are very popular as florist flowers. The *Chrysanthemum* flower symbolizes fidelity, optimism, joy and long life. A red *chrysanthemum* conveys love.