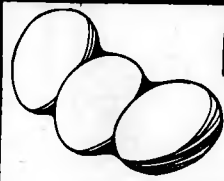


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## Pinch Plants to Get More, Better Blooms

Pinching may be a dangerous habit to develop, but it all depends on what's being pinched. If it's certain kinds of flowering plants, pinching is recommended.

You can pinch mums, zinnia, salvia (red sage), cockscomb (celosia), petunias, marigolds and snapdragons to slow down top growth, explain North Carolina State University agricultural extension specialists.

Pinching back new growth encourages lateral branching and more abundant blooms. Also, plants pinched back will be less likely to blow over or break in strong winds.

With mums, pinching

should continue until the middle of July. By then growth should be compact and sturdy, with flower buds forming.

One early pinching is usually enough for annuals such as petunias. Some newer types of annuals are base-branching and don't need pinching.

To pinch, use your index finger and thumbnail to break out the lead growth at the tip of the plant.

A good time to pinch back a little growth is at transplanting. This reduces the amount of plant area that must be fed by a root system that probably has been damaged or disturbed during transplanting.

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