Carrot Spider Mum

INGREDIENTS: A large, straight, room-temperature carrot 7 inches long and 1 inch wide for all 7 inches.

TOOLS & SUPPLIES: A 9-inch chef's knife, paring knife, bamboo skewer and a glass of cold water.

TIPS & TIMING: Cutting time: 5 to 10 minutes. Assembly: 2 minutes. Soaking: 30 minutes. Carrots that are cold have a tendency to crack, so let them warm up well before cutting.

USES: A lively flower for your "Vegetable Flowers-in-a-Vase" arrangement. By substituting a strong wooden pick for skewer or simply cutting off skewer just below completed flower, you can use this design as a platter or cutting board garnish.
1. Don't peel carrot; cut to make a straight, 7-inch length. Conserving as much of carrot's width as possible, slice off 3 sides, making right angle cuts.
2. Using uncut side as "back", saw-cut 4 or more slices that are as thick as a nickel off "front" side. Slices should be even in thickness all along their length.
3. Lengthwise cut 4 slits, equal distance apart, through each slice, leaving 1 inch uncut at each end. This yields slices with 5 bands.
4. Diagonally cut 2 outer bands of each slice in half, making their ends pointed.
5. Bend 1 strip into a loop, overlapping its uncut ends. Gently push (with a slight twisting motion) point of a bamboo skewer through center of overlapped ends, until point is through both layers and sticking into loop 1/2 inch.
6. Insert 1 end of a second strip into this loop and press it onto skewer. It's best to angle this second strip so it crisscrosses direction of first strip. Fold this strip up, over and back into loop, pressing its other end down onto tip of skewer. Keep feeding skewer into loop so its tip remains exposed. Now continue adding 1 or 2 more strips in same fashion at various angles, forming a ball-like shape out of bands.
7. Cup finished flower in your hand folding loose bands up around ball. Set it in this position into a glass of cold water to fix spikes into upright position. Be sure whole flower is immersed. Soak it for 1/2 hour. Check flower. If spikes still spring out too much for your taste, soak it a little longer. Tightly wrap finished flower in plastic and refrigerate. Display this flower as is or daub its top with a little honey and sprinkle poppy seeds onto honey. This will give flower a tiger lily coloration.