

TIPS FOR GROWING DAHLIAS

Dahlias provide some of the garden's biggest and most spectacular flowers. They also bloom non-stop from midsummer through fall, and will give you armloads of beautiful blossoms. Here are a few tips to help you get the best results.

HARDINESS ZONE:

Dahlias can be grown in hardiness zones 3-11. In zones 8-11, the tubers may be left in the ground year-round.

WHEN TO PLANT:

Plant dahlias at the same time as tomatoes -- after all danger of frost has passed. In cold climates, the tubers may be started indoors, 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost date. Plant one tuber per 8" pot and grow at 65°-75°F.



SUN AND SHADE:

Dahlias are sun-lovers and need a minimum of 6 hours of sunlight per day. The more sun you give them, the better they will bloom.

SOIL:

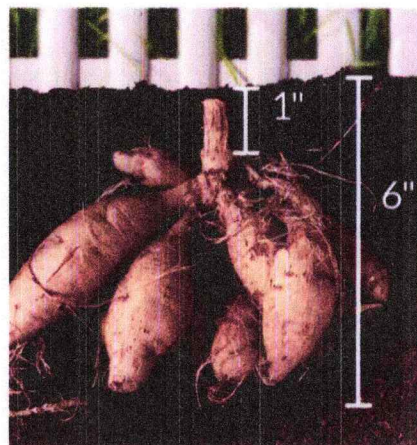
Dahlias will not grow in soggy or compacted soil. Plant the tubers in loose, well-drained soil that has been enhanced with compost and all-purpose fertilizer.

HOW TO PLANT:

Dig a 6" to 8" deep hole and put the tubers inside, keeping the stem and crown (where the tubers come together) upright. When the hole has been refilled, there should be no more than 1" to 2" of soil covering the crown.

WATER & FERTILIZER:

During the growing season, dahlias should get about 1" of water per week. It's best to water deeply and less often. In July, begin giving them a monthly application of water-soluble fertilizer.



GOOD THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DAHLIAS

THE TUBERS:

Each clump of tubers is a field-grown, 1-year old plant. New sprouts form around the old stem, at the base of the tubers. Don't be concerned if some of the tubers are broken or have come loose. Just plant the stem as instructed. Loose tubers will not sprout and can be discarded. Note that some dahlia varieties naturally produce smaller than average tubers. There is no correlation between tuber size and the size of the plant or the number of flowers it will produce.



PINCHING:

When the plant is about 10" tall, it will usually have at least 4 sets of leaves on the center stalk. If you pinch off the top pair of leaves before they have fully developed, it will stimulate growth at the other leaf nodes. This will give you a stronger, bushier plant.

SUPPORT:

If you are growing dahlias that will be more than 36" tall, the plants should be staked to support the stems and flowers. Use at least one sturdy, 5-6' stake per plant. Position the stake several inches away from the primary stem and drive it into the ground 12" deep. Inserting the stakes at planting time means less chance of damage later in the season. As the plant grows, tie stems to the stake every 12 to 18".

DEADHEADING:

To keep your dahlias healthy and get maximum flower production, it's important to remove spent flowers. Cutting back the stems, rather than simply nipping off the flower heads, will encourage the plant to produce long stems.



CONTAINERS:

Dahlias grow well in containers as long as the pots are large enough. For decorative and dinnerplate dahlias, the pots should be a minimum of 18" deep and 18" wide. Border dahlias may be grown in smaller pots that are a minimum of 12" deep and 12" wide.

