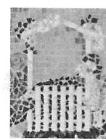


Dahlias – Living Fireworks



Buying dahlias

- Watch the Central States Dahlia Society in May for plant sale info.
- On-line options for tubers include Arrowhead, BJ's, Creekside, JS, Swan Island.
- Local stores that tend to have tubers in February/March: Costco, Home Depot, Meijers.
- Looking for a specific dahlia tuber? www.DahliaAddict.com will tell you which on-line suppliers have it.

Planting

- This is sun-loving plant. Plants can be 5 feet tall, with many blooms.
- Put a firm stake in the ground before you dig the hole. Plastic store-bought stakes will be too flimsy to support a full-sized dahlia during a summer windstorm. We use $\frac{1}{2}$ inch rebar bought from a hardware store, or use electrical conduit cut into 5 ft lengths. (For varieties with small blooms, a tomato cage is all that is needed.)
- Dig a 6" hole and optionally mix in 1 T Osmocote.
- Submerge plant (until the bubbling stops) in a pail of water (with a little Miracle Grow).
- Let it drain and plant it.

Soil testing

- A&L Great Lakes Laboratory, www.ALGreatLakes.com

Fertilizing

Dahlias are heavy feeders, so even if you use Osmocote, fertilizing them during the growing season will create bigger blooms, and more of them. If you don't, you will still get flowers.

- For June and July, a standard fertilizer like Miracle Grow, or an organic fertilizer (i.e., fish emulsion) is recommended. Every 2 – 3 weeks.
- In August and September use a fertilizer that is lighter on nitrogen and heavier on phosphorus (i.e., 15-30-15). Every week or 2.

Growing

Tie the plants to the stakes using twine as they grow. An easy technique is to fold a foot-long piece in half and loop around the stake, running the 2 loose ends through the loop. Use the two loose ends to secure the plant - a square knot works well. Tie the plant at 1 foot off the ground, then maybe every 18 inches after that. You can retie again at each 18 inches, or just move a tie up the plant as it gets taller.

To get more stalks on plants that will have large flowers (4 in diameter or larger flowers), pinch plants when they are one foot tall. Pinching the plant only requires you to remove the top-most center leaf grouping. This will encourage the plant to develop more lower vertical stalks, rather than putting all of its energy into growing a singular stalk straight up (it still could reach 5 feet of height). For those varieties with small blooms, don't pinch.

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If you want larger flowers, when the plant starts budding, disbud. Leave the top largest bud on each stalk, remove the 2 buds on each side (buds will always grow in groups of 3). Then slide down the stalk and remove the small shoots between the stem and the next branch. This will allow the plant to put more energy into a single bud. After the main flower is cut for a bouquet, the remaining lower buds will be ready to bloom in no time at all. If you do not disbud the plant, you will get more flowers, but they will be smaller.

As the plant gets 3 foot tall, you will see leaves at the bottom dying off due to lack of sun. This is normal, just remove them, the plant no longer needs them.

Powdery mildew

This might be an occasional issue, not every year. If needed,

- Horticultural oil, Safer Garden Fungicide, or Safer 3 in 1. Spray every 2-4 weeks, depending on weather. If it is hot with prevailing high humidity/rain, you may wish to reapply every 2 weeks being as it is being washed off the plant.
- Removing a few leaves at the bottom of the plant (or the interior of the bush) will also aid air circulation and help prevent mildew. Not mandatory, just a little special touch.
- Another option is to mix 1 T baking soda, $\frac{1}{2}$ t Dawn dish soap, 1 gallon water and spray it on plants, but you need to do this after every rain or overhead watering

Organic insect control

- Horticultural oil – Aphids, spider mites, whiteflies
- Safer brand products
 - Insect Killing soap for bugs
 - Garden Fungicide for powdery mildew, rust, and black spot
 - 3-in-1 for killing bugs, mites, fungicide

For more dahlia information

Central States Dahlia Society	www.centralstatesdahliasociety.com	- Meets monthly in Elk Grove Village
American Dahlia Society	www.dahlia.org	- Dahlia classification guide (no pics) - Fab 50
Colorado Dahlia Society	https://coloradodahlias.net	- Dahlia photo galleries - "BigList" Dahlia locator - Articles
OhWhatABeautiful Garden-Chicagoland	www.OhWhata.com 	- Carol's site, which has a tab at the top for Dahlias

Kelvin Hoodlight
Dahliaaddict.com