

Sid's Dahlia Growing Tips

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Generation Information

- Dahlias will grow in almost any type of soil, but they will do better in well-prepared soil with good drainage.
- Dahlias prefer as much sun as possible. They will tolerate some shade but their stems will not be as sturdy and they will have fewer and smaller flowers. Too much shade will produce very few or no flowers.
- A late spring frost will kill young sprouts, but they will usually sprout again.
- Dahlias take about 2 months to flower, but they will continue flowering until frost.

Planting and Growing

- Dig a hole 6 to 8 inches deep and work in a half-handful or so of 6-12-12 granular fertilizer making sure that it is well worked in so as not to burn the tuber. Some people use 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer. Also, some people broadcast their fertilizer and work it into the soil around a week or so before planting.
- Plant the tuber horizontally in a hole 6 to 8 inches deep with the eye pointed upwards making sure not to break off the sprout. The tuber will likely grow a new sprout if you break it off, but doing so will slow the plant's growth.
- Watch out for slugs, especially at the beginning, since they will keep eating the green sprout as it comes through the ground, or even sooner, giving the impression that the plant is not growing.
- Sometime between mid-July and mid-August, before the plants get too big, apply a dressing of 6-12-12 a short distance from the stem so as not to burn the plant and then hill the soil around the plant.
- Since dahlias grow 3 or 4 feet tall, they will need some support. I have at times used tomato frames or plastic add-on stakes. Last year I made wooden frames about 2 to 2.5 feet high onto which to tie the plants, in combination with the plastic add-on stakes. Many people use wooden or metal (rebar) stakes that they drive into the soil before planting and then plant one or two tubers at a stake with the eye positioned closest to the stake. If two, plant the second tuber on the opposite side of the stake.

Digging Up and Storage

- Dahlia tubers need to be dug up and stored after a killing frost, as they will not survive in climates where the soil freezes in the winter.
- Stalks should be cut off 4 to 6 inches above the ground and the tubers left in the ground for 4 to 6 days so that the new eyes will start to develop for the next growing season.
- Gently lift the clump of tubers from the soil with a shovel being careful not to break the necks of the tubers. Cutting the ends of the tubers will not hurt them.
- Wash them off, dry them, and then divide them and store them in wood shavings (or vermiculite) in ventilated plastic bags at a temperature between 4 °C and 8 °C (approximately 40 °F to 45 °F).

Happy gardening,

Sid