



Dahlias

Hardening off your purchased, potted dahlia: Your plant has been in a greenhouse for the past month. Before planting it in the ground, place it in a shady place for a day or two; gradually increase the amount of sun each day until it receives 6+ hours of sun at the end of the week. If nighttime temperatures are predicted to dip below 50 degrees F, give the plant protection. The tubers are 4" deep in the pots and that is the depth they should be in the ground.

Planting: Dahlias need slightly acidic, well-drained soil, rich in organic matter that is above 60 degrees F. They need a site in full sun (6-8 hours). Prepare the planting area by spreading and mixing 2-3 inches of compost or composted cow manure, with a low nitrogen long-acting fertilizer. Or place a Tbs. of Osmocote in the hole with the plant/tuber. Space the dahlias 18-24 inches apart.

Staking: Staking is recommended as Dahlias grow quite tall (3-6 feet). Using at least 2 stakes is helpful, as they also grow wide. Tie the main stem loosely with twine or other soft material to stake when 12 inches high. Continue tying the main stem and branches as the dahlia grows.

Watering: When planting a dahlia plant, water well after planting. If planting a tuber, wait to see some growth above ground before watering. Water dahlias once a week throughout the season with 1 inch per week. Water at the base of the plant to avoid getting the foliage wet.

Dead Heading: Remove spent blooms regularly to encourage the plant to produce more flowers. Cut the stem just above a leaf node to encourage branching and bushier growth.

Pests: The two most frequent pests of dahlias are slugs and earwigs. Apply an organic product that helps control snails and slugs around the plants per direction on the label. Re-apply every 4 weeks.

End of Season: During most winters on Cape Cod dahlia tubers can be left in the ground. However, after two years, the clumps of tubers should be dug up and separated. One to two weeks after first fall frost (or the first week of November), cut down stems, leaving 5-6 inches. Carefully dig up clump of tubers about a foot away from the center stalk with a garden fork. Rinse clumps and dry in a sheltered spot for approximately 24 hours. Clumps are easier to separate in the Fall when they are still soft. There are multiple videos on-line showing how to separate and store them. Storage areas must have temps. between 35-50 degrees and be relatively humid, as in an attached garage, unheated basement, or bulkhead.

Online Dahlia Information: [The American Dahlia Society --Storing dahlias for winter](#); [National Garden Bureau -- Storing dahlias for winter](#)

