

CARE OF AND PLANTING YOUR DAHLIA TUBERS

All tubers should be firm and have good eyes. (Growth tips showing growth). The tiny eyes are from where your plant will grow so try not to break them off. They sometimes regrow but it takes awhile so don't throw the tuber out if you do break off the eye. If waiting to plant outside put your bags of dahlias into a cool area to deter too much growth. Check your tuber bags regularly to make sure your dahlias are not drying out (tubers starting to have wrinkly skin). You can give a **very light spray** of water if they are drying.

Potting your Tubers

To get a jump on things you can pot your tubers. One gallon pots work well. Use a light commercial soil mix or whatever works for you. Newly potted dahlias do not like too much water, or the tuber may rot, too dry and the growth will dry out. **The early growth feeds off the tuber** so keep the pot slightly moist but not wet (using a spray bottle works well). After growth gets to be about 3 in. 7.5 cm the preference is to keep your potted plant in a greenhouse or sheltered location outdoors, like a sunny porch, or it may get leggy. They will be frost sensitive. Direct sun from a window can burn eyes and new growth, and direct sun, when plants go outside, can also burn new growth. Harden off your plants by slowly introducing them to the sun, starting for a very short time and increasing each day. You can also place the pots where they get a little bit of sun and move the pots into a more sunny area as time goes on..

Planting Outside

Plant dahlias when soil is 50F or 10C as that is the required temperature for them to grow. They prefer 6 hours of sunlight per day, good drainage, regular watering, and regular fertilizer for maximum growth and bloom production. In the Victoria area you can usually start planting outside mid April to mid May, depending on your location and protection. Tubers can usually go in earlier than plants if the eyes are below the soil and protected from frost. Always remember to harden off your plants before planting outside.

Prepare your planting site and dig a 9 to 12 inch deep and 12 inch wide hole, depending on whether you are planting a tuber or plant. Place a stake at the edge of the hole for tying your plant to later. Put some fertilizer like 6-8-6 or organic product along with some bone meal into the hole and stir it in. Add some soil above and then place in your tuber with the eyes facing up. Your plant will have the same procedure but go into the deeper hole. You want to end up with the crown of your plant about 3 to 4 inches below the soil. It works well to take a few lower leaves off the plant so the crown is 3 to 4 inches below the soil. Slugs can decimate early growth so scatter slug bait (like Safers Slug Bait) in the planting area or perimeter, not against the plant.

Depending on wind conditions start tying your plant to the stake at 1 foot high. Tie a bit loosely with a figure 8 to start as it provides movement for the stem to strengthen.

Enjoy! Victoria Dahlia Society www.victoriadahliasociety.org

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