



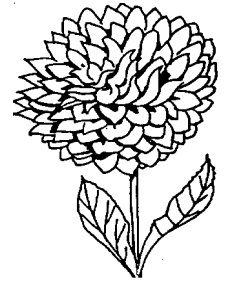
J&L Garden Center

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Dahlia Care



Whether you grow dahlias from seeds or from tubers, dahlias can furnish a vast array of colorful flowers from summer through fall. From a few wild Mexican and Guatemalan dahlia varieties, hybridizers have created a myriad of showy varieties of garden dahlias. The plants range in height from six inches to six feet tall. The blossoms vary from one inch to over twelve inches in diameter. There is a wide variety of colors, styles and shapes available, perfect to add color and variety to your flower gardens.

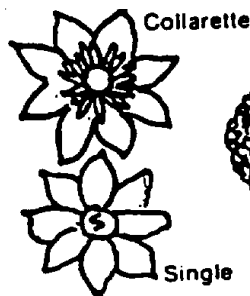
Varieties

Dahlias are available in many different colors, shapes, sizes (of both plants and flowers), and varieties. Dwarf dahlias are nice for borders while decorative dinnerplate dahlias grow tall, and need to be planted in the center or in the back of your flower garden.

Dinnerplate dahlias have huge blossoms. They are the "Queen of the Dahlias". The blossoms can grow more than twelve inches in diameter. Most dinnerplate dahlia varieties are a single color; red, pink, lavender, white, etc. However, some decorative dahlias are bi-colored and have a very large variation in color schemes. Many garden clubs have dahlia growing contests to see who can grow the largest and best shaped dinnerplate dahlias. Dinnerplate dahlias grow quite tall, up to 5 to 6 feet tall. They usually need to be staked to protect them from the wind.

Cactus dahlias can also get very large blossoms, just not as large as the dinnerplate varieties. These types of dahlias are available in solid colors or in a vast array of bi-color flowers. The petals are very long and have a many different shapes. The petals may be long and narrow like a blade of grass or they may be long and have a spoon shaped tip. Cactus dahlias can be very rewarding to grow.

Ball Shaped dahlias are generally small plants and have small globe shaped flowers. The petals are small and very tight.



Collarette dahlias have a central disk surrounded by a collar of short ruffled or cupped petals and backed by a second collar of broad, flat petals. They are very interesting flowers to enjoy.

Anemone shaped dahlias have a central disk that is obscured by a fluffy ball of



short, tubular petals and surrounded by one or two rows of longer, flat petals.

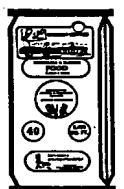
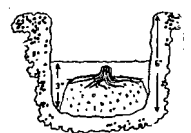
Pom Pom shaped dahlias are small, round balls of tightly rolled petals, usually less than two inches in diameter.

Planting

Plant dwarf dahlias by seed as soon as the ground is warm enough to rototill. The warmer the soil, the faster the seeds will germinate and grow. If you plant dwarf dahlias from seedlings, wait until after the last frost to buy them - dahlias do not like cold weather.

Do not plant dahlia tubers outside until after the last spring frost. You start your dahlias inside in large containers, but wait until May to plant them outside. Dahlias like warm soil, not cold soil. They like full sun but will tolerate partial shade. They need to be planted in fertile, well drained soil. They do not like to be kept wet.

Dig a hole six to eight inches deep. Fertilize the soil in and around the hole with either **Bone Meal** or **6-10-4 Flower Fertilizer**. Place the tuber in the bottom of the hole and cover it with two or three inches



of soil, do not completely fill in the hole. Place a stake (three to five feet long) next to the tuber when you plant it. If you try staking the dahlia plants later you may damage some of their roots, which may prevent the blossoms from getting as large as they could.



As the tuber begins to grow add soil to the hole so that you fill in the hole completely, or even have the soil slightly mounded around the plant, by mid summer. Dahlias need plenty of room to grow if you want large plants and large blossoms. Plant dinnerplate or cactus dahlias two or three feet apart.

Summer Care

Dahlias should be watered often enough to prevent the soil from drying out. Put mulch over the soil to help retain the moisture and help cool the soil from the extreme summer heat. Fertilize your dahlias every three to four weeks during the summer using either **6-10-4 Flower Fertilizer** or **Fertilome Blooming & Rooting Fertilizer**. Dahlia roots are quite shallow so don't cultivate more than an inch deep around the plants. Pull the weeds rather than cutting them.



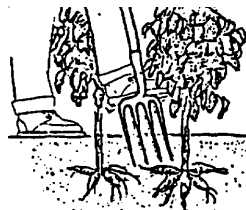
Picking Flowers

Cut dahlia flowers can last up to a week if they are properly cared for at picking time. Always cut dahlia flowers early in the morning or after sunset. Place the cut stems in very hot water immediately after cutting. Let the water gradually cool down. Once cut, do not let the stems run out of water.



Winter Care

Dig dahlia tubers after a frost has turned the leaves yellow. Do not let the tubers freeze severely or they will die. Either divide the tubers as you store them or divide them in the spring before you plant them. Dividing them in the spring is preferred because bigger tubers are easier to store.



Shake most of the soil off the tubers and dust them with **Soil and Bulb Dust**. This dust will kill both insects and diseases. Pack the tubers in saw-



dust, peatmoss or vermiculite. Store them in wooden boxes, not in plastic bags. Dahlias need to be stored moist, but not too wet or too dry. Keep them above freezing during the winter and let them warm up a little in the spring before you divide them.



Check them occasionally during the winter. If they are too wet, let them dry out. If they are too dry, moisten them a little.

Insects & Diseases

Aphids, thrips, and spidermites are three pests that like dahlias. Many butterfly larvae (caterpillars) also feed on dahlia leaves. If you are enjoying butter-



flies in your garden you may want to tolerate a few leaves with holes rather than try to control the caterpillars. Unfortunately you do not have a choice when it comes to thrips and spidermites. If you want your plants to grow and bloom you have to control these insects.

Systemic Rose & Flower Care is one good way to prevent insects and fertilize the plants at the same time. Unfortunately, once you get some of these pests the only way to get rid of them is to spray with an insecticide. Try not to spray the blossoms, just spray the leaves and stems.

Systemic insecticides such as **Orthene** or **Merit** are good insecticides to use to kill aphids, thrips, and spidermites.

Insecticidal Soap or **Eight Insect Control** (organic insecticides) will kill some of these insects (aphids & some spidermites) but not all of them - thrips are usually inside the blossoms and almost impossible to kill organically. If you want to use something more natural, try washing off the plants with a strong stream of water, it works to a degree on both aphids and spidermites but not on thrips.



Powdery mildew is the most common disease affecting dahlias. Don't sprinkle the leaves, especially at night, and you might be lucky and prevent most disease problems. **Fungaway** and **Systemic Fungicide** are two good sprays to use to control most dahlia diseases.

Greenlight Powdery Mildew Spray is an organic way to get rid of powdery mildew and control many insects, at the same time. This is a good, safe product that is fairly effective without harming too many beneficial insects. However, this product will still kill the butterfly larvae that like to eat and nest in dahlia plants.

