



# YOUR GUIDE TO GROWING DAHLIAS

## DAHLIA RESOURCES

WSU Whatcom County Extension | [WHATCOM.WSU.EDU](http://WHATCOM.WSU.EDU)  
American Dahlia Society | [WWW.DAHLIA.ORG](http://WWW.DAHLIA.ORG)

### Organizations

[Federation of Northwest Dahlia Societies](http://WWW.NWDAHLIA.ORG)

Encompasses 11 clubs around the northwest. Federation clubs have monthly meetings, tuber sales in April, and shows in August/September. They may also maintain a dahlia demonstration garden.

[WWW.NWDAHLIA.ORG](http://WWW.NWDAHLIA.ORG)

### Growers

[Birch Bay Gardens](http://WWW.BIRCHBAYDAHLIAS.COM) | [WWW.BIRCHBAYDAHLIAS.COM](http://WWW.BIRCHBAYDAHLIAS.COM)

[Swan Island Dahlias, Canby, OR](http://WWW.DAHLIAS.COM) | [WWW.DAHLIAS.COM](http://WWW.DAHLIAS.COM)

[Dan's Dahlias, Oakville, WA](http://WWW.DANSDAHLIAS.COM) | [WWW.DANSDAHLIAS.COM](http://WWW.DANSDAHLIAS.COM)

[Clearview Dahlias, Snohomish](http://WWW.CLEARVIEWDAHLIAS.COM) | [WWW.CLEARVIEWDAHLIAS.COM](http://WWW.CLEARVIEWDAHLIAS.COM)

### Gardens

[Butchart Gardens](#) | VANCOUVER ISLAND

[Hovander Homestead County Park](#) | FERNDALE

[Volunteer Park, north of Asian Art Museum](#) | SEATTLE

[Bellevue Botanical Garden](#) | BELLEVUE

[American Dahlia Society trial garden at Point Defiance Park](#) | TACOMA

### Shows/Exhibits

[Northwest Washington Fair](#) | LYNDEN  
2<sup>nd</sup> full week of August

[Snohomish County Dahlia Society](#) | EVERETT  
3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of August at Forest Park

[Whatcom County Dahlia Society](#) | BELLINGHAM  
Weekend after Labor Day at Bloedel-Donovan Park

[Vancouver Dahlia Society](#) | VANCOUVER  
Labor Day weekend at VanDusen Park



## Whatcom County

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

WSU Extension  
Whatcom County  
Master Gardener Program

# DAHLIA VARIETIES

## Picking your tubers

- Check bloom size and plant height when picking colors, shapes and dahlia forms you prefer.
- Attain tubers from a Dahlia Society tuber sale, commercial dahlia grower, or a willing donor. Purchasing from commercial or vetted growers is the safest way to ensure a disease-free plant. Check the back page for a list of growers.
- If possible, keep track of the cultivar name. Named varieties may have more value when divided and sold at a plant sale, or when blooms are displayed at a competitive fair or show.

# PLANTING DAHLIA TUBERS

## Ideal growing and soil conditions

Dahlias have similar needs as a vegetable garden:

- Well-drained soil
- Lots of organic material
- Full sun, or at least half-day sun
- Cover crop in fall, fertilize before planting in spring, and mulch in early summer

## Prepare for planting tubers

Expect to plant tubers outside when the lilacs bloom in your area, around May 1<sup>st</sup>. Don't forget to fertilize your tuber planting holes 2 weeks beforehand. The planting holes should be about 2' apart.

### *Suggested fertilizer mix*

¼ lb. of 10-20-20 per plant hole

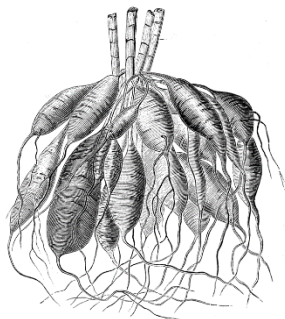
OR ½ cup of Organic Mix per plant hole:

(2 parts Bone Meal, 2 parts Blood Meal, 1.5 parts K-Mag or Sul-Po-Mag, 1 part Greensand, 2 parts Cottonseed Meal, 1 part Kelp Meal)

## Planting

Dahlias grow tall and usually require support. Place 4' stakes for each plant 6"-9" away from where you will place the tuber. Drive them a foot into the ground before planting to avoid damaging the tuber clump.

- Plant the tuber clumps about 4" deep, 2' apart
- Make sure the growing "eyes" face up
- Don't water at planting; wait until the top growth shows. Tubers can rot before the new roots start to take up available moisture



# GROWING + MANAGING

## Caring for your dahlias

- Watch for slugs when plants first sprout, as they can severely damage tender plants.
- Water when the ground is dry, about weekly if little rainfall, otherwise they may wilt.
- Tie the plant to the stake when the plant grows to about 18" and 36", then tie laterals as needed.
- Eliminate weak or unhealthy plants from the garden. Try getting the variety again next year from another source, or replace it with another cultivar.
- Remember to lightly fertilize again in July with a handful of 10-20-20. Work it into the soil around the plant.

**PRO TIP** Deadhead the wilting blooms by cutting the stem above the set of leaves beneath the flower. This will lengthen the blooming life of the plant until mid-fall. You can also cut off the side buds to attain larger blooms with longer, usable stems.

## End of season care

Dahlia tubers may suffer during the winter months if under stressful conditions. Tubers that are not planted deep enough into the ground may freeze and perish, or they may rot if soils do not drain well. Consider your garden conditions when deciding how to overwinter your dahlias.

- Cut down the plants to the ground when the rains start, usually around early November. Cover the site with mulch or a cover crop and look for them to come back the following April/May.
- Alternatively, dig up the tubers and store them in a non-freezing location, such as a basement, and replant in spring.

# PESTS & DISEASES

- Common pests: slugs, aphids, thrips, and earwigs. Deer atypically eat dahlias.
- Dahlia Mosaic Virus: short, stunted plants that may have curly leaves or leaves with yellow splotches. Aphids and thrips can spread dahlia virus from one plant to another.

Contact the [WSU Whatcom Master Gardener Clinic](http://whatcom.wsu.edu) for diagnosis and management.

Clinic Hours: M-F 9-12 & 1-4PM  
1000 N. Forest Street, Suite 201  
(360) 778-5808 · [whatcom.wsu.edu/ch](http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch)