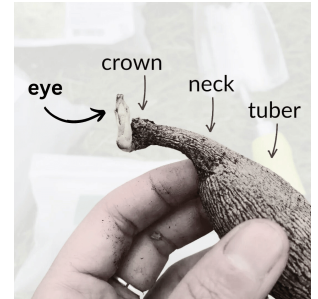


Dahlias Plant from 1 week after last frost until 4 weeks after last frost.

What to do Before Planting

Native to Mexico and Central America, dahlias are sensitive to frost. Plant them after all danger of frost has passed, around the same time as tomatoes. Pick a sunny spot with well-draining, fertile, slightly acidic soil. Because dahlias are so diverse, spacing requirements will differ depending on type, but a good rule of thumb is to space tubers between 12-24" apart. Store tubers in a cool place until two weeks before planting, then store at room temperature until planting; this will "wake up" the tubers before they go in the ground. If your growing season is short, follow the instructions above and then you can start dahlias indoors in large containers up to 4-6 weeks ahead of the final frost.



How to Plant

The tuber itself stores all of the nutrients needed for the plant to send out its first set of leaves and fine roots. Locate the crown of the tuber above the neck and rest the tuber sideways into the hole with the crown toward the soil surface. Bury the tuber, lightly pressing the soil around it, avoiding damage to the eye(s).

Select a spot with full sun and well-draining soil. When planting outdoors, dig a hole approximately 6" deep by 6" wide. Larger clumps of tubers will need a wider hole. Lay tubers into the soil horizontally about 4-6" below the surface, 12-24" apart, with the growing eye facing upwards. If the soil is very dry at planting, water it lightly. Otherwise, wait to water until sprouts emerge from the ground. Emergence varies *dramatically* from plant to plant and can take up to 3 weeks.

Growing Conditions and Care

Once established, plants appreciate plentiful water—a deep soaking 2-3 times per week is ideal in normal conditions. Plants also benefit from a low-nitrogen organic fertilizer applied once or twice. Too much nitrogen will result in leafy foliage and will inhibit production. Dahlias can grow top-heavy and fall over in the wind, so it's also a good idea to add stakes early on and tie your dahlia to the stake as it grows. Staking is recommended for varieties that reach 3 feet or more in height.

Harvesting

Cut the flowers frequently to encourage plentiful blooms for as long a season as possible. Or, leave some flowers to open up fully and attract pollinators. For more blooms, cut often! Don't just deadhead, harvest just-opening blooms for indoor vase arrangements and bouquets. Dahlias are generally very prolific and will bloom right up to the first frost.

How to Save Your Own Dahlia Tubers & Storing

To retain tubers for future years, gently dig them up about 2 weeks after a killing frost. Cut the stem down to about 6 inches, rinse off dirt, and allow the tubers to air dry in a protected place for 24 hours. After curing, tubers can be divided, packed in a dry storage medium—such as peat moss, wood shavings, or dry sand—and stored in a cool, protected area for the winter (40°-50°F is ideal). A cool basement works, as does any free space in your fridge. *Do not allow tubers to freeze!* Check the tubers monthly throughout the winter: remove any that show signs of rot, and adjust conditions if needed.

Dos and Don'ts

Do: *Plant in a sunny location *Use compost and fertilizer *Plant tubers on their sides *Water regularly after growth * Deadhead regularly *Give the buyers time to wake up before planting *Be patient for them to emerge *Enjoy!

Don't: *Do Not plant in a shady or wet location *Do Not use a high nitrogen fertilizer *Do Not water before the plant sprouts *Do Not plant before allowing the tubers to "wake up" for a week or two