

# GROWING DAHLIAS



**Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation**



## **DAHLIA CULTURE**

### **SOIL**

Dahlias have the same needs as a vegetable garden

Well-drained soil

Lots of Organic Material

Cover Crop in Fall, Compost before planting in Spring, Mulch in early Summer

### Fertilize

Do a soil test

¼ lb. of 10-20-20 per stake, and/or,

½ cup of Organic Mix per stake

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

Broadcast fertilizer and spade in with the compost 2 weeks before planting.

Light fertilization in July

Handful of 10-20-20, broadcast around plant, or, application of Bloom booster

## **DAHLIA VARIETIES**

Pick colors, shapes and dahlia forms you prefer.

Check bloom size and plant height.

Purchase from Commercial dahlia growers rather than from the bin at the garden department

Get tubers from a Dahlia Society tuber sale, or, if a friend has a dahlia you like, get a tuber from them.

Throw out weak or unhealthy plants, or blooms you don't like – try getting the variety again next year from another source, or replace it with another cultivar.

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.

## **EFFORT**

### **Planting**

Dahlias like as much sun as you can give them – at least half-day sun.  
Plant tubers outside when the lilacs bloom in your area, around May 1<sup>st</sup>.  
If a stake is needed, put it in the ground before you plant the tuber.  
Plant the tuber about 4” deep, about 9” from the stake. About 2 feet apart.  
Don’t water, tubers can rot before the new roots start to take up available moisture.  
Watch for Slugs!

### **Growing**

You can pinch the top of the plant when it has 4-5 sets of leaves.  
You can limit the number of stalks to one or two on each plant.  
You can tie the plant to the stake at about 18” and 36”, then tie laterals as needed.  
You can disbud the side buds to get larger blooms with longer usable stems.  
Water when the ground is dry. Dahlias will wilt if they don’t get enough water.  
DEADHEAD! This will lengthen the blooming life of the plant until mid-Fall.

### **Pests and Diseases**

Slugs

Aphids, especially the black ones

Thrips

Earwigs

Dahlia viruses – short, stunted plants that may have curly leaves or leaves with yellow splotches should be destroyed. Aphids and thrips can spread dahlia virus from one plant to another.

Deer – NOT! Dahlias are usually one of the last things a deer will eat in your garden.

### **End of the Season**

Don’t wait for the killing frost in this area.

Do cut down your plants when the ground gets so cold that there aren’t any new blooms. The plants usually are pretty beat up by rain and wind then anyway. First part of November?

Cut plants to the ground, cover with mulch and look for them to come back next April/May, or,

Dig and store in a non-freezing location.

## RESOURCES FOR DAHLIAS

### Internet

WSU Whatcom County Extension Home Page

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/>

Colorado Dahlia Society – culture, pictures, lists of growers and varieties available

<http://www.dahlias.net/>

American Dahlia Society – standard classification info and other official stuff, pictures.

<http://www.dahlia.org/>

E-mail discussion groups – check out dahlia-net, dahlias and dahlia-alert

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

### Organizations

Whatcom County Master Gardener Foundation – contact (360) 676-6736

whatcom@wsu.edu

Federation of Northwest Dahlia Societies (11 clubs around the Northwest), includes:

Skagit Valley Dahlia Society – contact Nadine DeGolier (360) 629-4439

nadinestone62@yahoo.net

Whatcom County Dahlia Society – contact Paul Bloomquist (360) 354-4346

pabloomer@comcast.net

Federation clubs have monthly meetings, tuber sales in April and shows in August or September.

They may also maintain a dahlia demonstration garden.

### Growers

Wynne's Dahlias, Ferndale, WA (360) 384-3439 [www.wynnesdahlias.com](http://www.wynnesdahlias.com)

Birch Bay Gardens [www.birchbaydahlias.com](http://www.birchbaydahlias.com)

Swan Island Dahlias, Canby, OR (800) 410-6540 [www.dahlias.com](http://www.dahlias.com)

Dan's Dahlias, Oakville, WA (360) 482-2406 [www.dansdahlias.com](http://www.dansdahlias.com)

Clearview Dahlias [www.clearviewdahlias.com](http://www.clearviewdahlias.com)

### Gardens

Butchart Gardens, Vancouver Island

Hovander Homestead County Park, Ferndale, WA

Volunteer Park, Seattle (behind and to the North of the Asian Art Museum)

Point Defiance Park, Tacoma (American Dahlia Society trial garden)

Bellevue Botanical Garden, Bellevue

### Shows/Exhibits

Skagit County Dahlia Society – second weekend of August at Skagit Gardens

Northwest Washington Fair – second full week of August, Lynden

Snohomish County Dahlia Society – third weekend of August at Forest Park, Everett

Whatcom County Dahlia Society – weekend after Labor Day, Bloedel-Donovan Park

Vancouver Dahlia Society – Labor Day weekend, VanDusen Park, Vancouver

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