

HOW TO GROW DAHLIA

Dahlias are beautiful perennials usually found in tropical climates and native to Central America and Mexico that are produced in multitude of colors, patterns, sizes and forms. According to statistics, there are more than 30,000 species of dahlias in the world which an estimated 30 species bloom around late summer or early autumn. They grow from tubers usually planted outdoors after the last frost. Unfortunately, they cannot withstand freezing temperatures so you need to dig them up and store the tubers indoors and replant them in the spring. For dog and cat lovers, please be aware that dahlias can be toxic to pets.

Planting Procedure:

Step 1: Preparing to Plant

- A. Dahlias come in different sizes and colors. Decide on the size of plant that will best suit your garden space.
- B. Visit your local garden center to purchase fresh dahlia tubers.
- C. Determine your climate zone and identify where your dahlias can grow best. They thrive in warm, sunny climates, so in winter season, they have to be kept as tubers indoors or place them in greenhouses.
- D. Spring is the best time to plant dahlias or wait until the last frost has passed. Another thing to consider is that the ground temperature should not go below 16°C; otherwise, dahlias will not grow well.



Step 2: Planting Dahlias

- A. Choose a full sun and low wind location. Dahlias require at least 6-8 hours of sunlight a day but need to be protected from strong winds to prevent large flowers from being blown away.
- B. Well-draining and fertile soil are important for dahlias. Some ways to improve draining are by adding sand to the soil, add peat moss or compost into the heavy soil to loosen it.
- C. Prior to growing dahlias, prepare the soil by adding compost or manure into it using a spade. This will ensure the plant grow well and bloom quickly.
- D. Start digging holes for the dahlia tubers approximately 4 inches deep. Leave some appropriate space around 2 feet between holes so they won't crowd out each other when they reach full mature size.
- E. Dahlias require lots of fertilizer to grow successfully. Adding compost to the soil in advance increases the chance for the plants to bloom brightly. Fertilizers mainly compose of compost, bone meal and dry fertilizer which can be sourced at the local garden centre.
- F. Plant dahlia tubers in the prepared hole then fill it up with soil. Within 2-3 weeks, you may expect the tubers to grow.



Step 3: Watering & Maintaining Dahlia

- A. In the beginning, watering is not needed as it may do more harm than good to the plant. Once sprouts appear above the soil, water the dahlias in the morning.
- B. Once dahlias begin to sprout, use low-nitrogen liquid fertilizer popularly used for vegetable gardens to help dahlias bloom incessantly.
- C. Dahlias can get top-heavy after some time, so it would be best to use stakes to support the weight of the stems and flowers.
- D. Remove all other buds except at the very top of the plant using a pair of pruning shears if you want to produce a large, showy flower; otherwise, you can let all the buds grow.
- E. Dahlias cannot withstand freezing winters. Once cold season begins, dig up dahlia tubers and store them in cool, dry place over winter. Place them in a box with good air flow filled with peat moss or vermiculite.
- F. During winter, periodically check on the tubers for signs of dryness or rot. Simple remove black spots of white or pink mold and provide light mist to a dried out tuber.

Add: 8451 No.5 RD Richmond BC V6Y 2V5, Richmond, BC, Canada, British Columbia

Phone number: +1 604-277-0871

Website: www.dajueartgarden.com

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