

DIGGING AND STORING

Around November 1st, cut dahlias down and lift the roots carefully with a spade by digging around the entire plant about one foot from the stalk. Use care to prevent “broken necks”. Roots are washed, stalks trimmed at root level, and soaked in fungicide (Captain recommended). An alternative is to soak roots in a mixture of 1 cup household bleach to two gallons of water. Roots should be labeled and divided (*see illustration 4*) or stored as a clump.

The roots will keep best if the storage area is cool but always kept above freezing. Most growers store roots in a medium such as slightly damp vermiculite or cedar chips in order to prevent shriveling. Line a box with plastic and put alternate layers of vermiculite or cedar chips and roots. Check roots twice during the winter and discard any that show rot.

Dahlia roots left in the ground will survive cold winter days if kept from freezing. This usually is accomplished by heaping straw or mulch over the roots. However, the risk remains that a cool spring will encourage roots to rot. Good drainage is essential for roots to be kept successfully in this manner.

QUESTIONS ?

The KITSAP COUNTY DAHLIA SOCIETY is composed of enthusiastic dahlia growers who are eager to assist you and to provide more information about the growing and showing of dahlias. If you have any questions, contact:

Kitsap County Dahlia Society
P.O. Box 502

Silverdale, WA 98383-0502



Growing Dahlias with the

KITSAP COUNTY DAHLIA SOCIETY

Dahlias, with their countless shapes and colors, add spice to any garden venture. Get off to a good start by planting the best varieties, then follow this guide for a festival of blooms from July until frost.

Planning the Garden

Location: The ideal location for dahlias is one in full sun; however, the plants will tolerate some shade.

Drainage: The soil must be well drained; a neutral soil is preferable to a highly acid one. Avoid planting close to shrubs and trees.

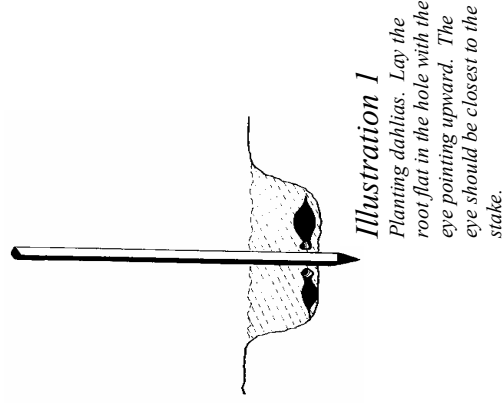
Planting: Dahlias vary in height from one foot to seven feet. Check each variety for its height, and plant where suitable - the taller ones to the rear of the garden, the dwarf bedders as border decoration. Space your dahlias according to bloom size - the larger blooming ones should be planted two to three feet from other plants, while the smaller blooming varieties can be planted one to two feet apart.

Soil: Most dahlias thrive in well prepared, well-drained soil. A basic soil conditioner that will improve any garden is an application of moist peat moss and manure. Compost is also an excellent soil amendment. Thoroughly turn the soil before planting.

Fertilizer: About two weeks before planting, broadcast 10-20-20 over the soil and spade it in. In mid-July, a light top dressing of steamed bonemeal and muriate of potash will enhance the color of the blooms and help promote tuber growth. If not available, 10-20-20 can be used, but avoid using fertilizers high in nitrogen or you'll have more leaves than blooms.

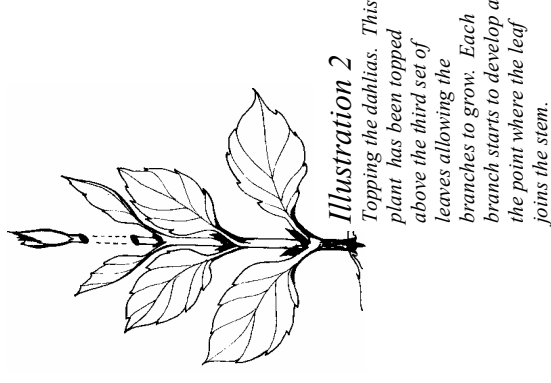
PLANTING PROCEDURES

1. The time to plant in this area is after the last frost, between April 15 and June 1.
2. Check your soil for proper moisture. It is better to plant when the soil is a bit dry than wet.
3. Place stakes where tubers are to be planted.
4. Remove about 5 inches of soil, place tuber flat with the eye upward, near the stake (*see illustration 1*). Cover the tuber with soil. The tubers should be planted shallower in heavy soils.



MANAGING IN THE SUMMER

- Watering:** Water every two weeks—more frequently if very hot, and when buds begin to form. A thorough, deep watering is better than frequent, light watering.
- Pinching:** To have compact, bushy plants with more flowers, pinch out the center growing tip when the plant is about one foot high (*see illustration 2*).
- Disbudding:** For bigger blooms, better stems, and better quality, pinch off the side buds at the end of each growing branch (*see illustration 3*).
- Pest Control:** Dahlias are loved by slugs in the spring, by spider mites in the heat of summer, and by aphids just about anytime. Surround young plants with slug bait or “Deadline”.
- Spraying:** Then spray every two weeks in the summer with *Malathion* or *Diazinon*; alternate the sprays to confuse the bugs.
- Weeding:** Since dahlias have many surface roots, only light cultivation is recommended. After July, cultivate no deeper than two inches, and not closer than one and a half feet from the main stalk.



Planting dahlias

Pinching the dahlia

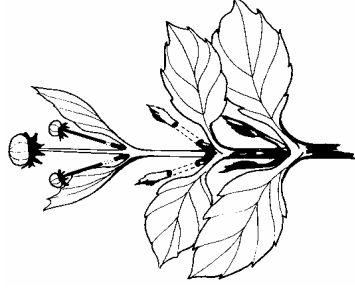
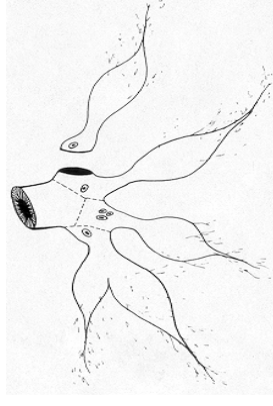


Illustration 3 Disbudding the dahlia

Illustration 4 Dividing the dahlia clump



CUTTING THE FLOWERS

Cut early in the morning or late at night. To properly condition the blooms, place them in water away from drafts for eight to twelve hours. Display your flowers in a cool part of your home. By misting regularly and by changing the water every other day, your blooms will last up to a week.