

## ADS Dahlia University – Planting and Staking

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Conditions for growing dahlias vary, depending on local climate, soil conditions and humidity. In order to grow a beautiful dahlia garden, growers employ different strategies in order to accommodate local growing conditions.

Dahlia gardens are most commonly started by the planting of tuberous roots that we call **tubers** (photo below).



Dahlia plants result when the “eyes” on the crown of the tubers develop, causing the emergence of sprouts (photo below).



### **WHEN SHOULD I PLANT?**

In the northern hemisphere, dahlia tubers are usually planted between late April and the end of May. Before planting tubers in the ground, your soil should have attained a temperature of around 60 degrees F and all danger of frost should be past.

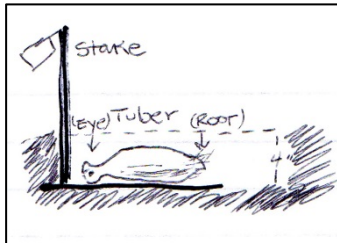
### **WHERE SHOULD I PLANT?**

Choose an area where your plants will get at least 6 hours of full sunlight. Morning sunlight with afternoon shade is ideal. Your soil should drain well, so that each watering is adequate to allow the plant to absorb enough moisture, but doesn't leave your soil wet and muddy. You may need to amend your soil in order to make sure that water does not pool up at the base of your plants, or get soggy around the roots. There are simple soil tests that you can do at home to determine whether your soil is rocky,

sandy, loamy or predominantly clay. Sand, peat moss, and/or bagged animal fertilizers can be mixed in accordingly to lighten and loosen the texture of your soil for better drainage.

## HOW DO I PLANT?

Know your soil. If you grow in a moist area, where you get dew and moderate rainfall (as in the Pacific Northwest), your soil is probably adequately moist for planting. If your soil is bone dry, as it often is in areas of drought or in desert conditions, you may need to water the soil so that it is moist (not wet) before planting. Pound a dahlia stake where you plan to plant before putting your tuber in, then tag the stake with the dahlia name. Your holes should be shallow, generally about 4"-6" deep, and broad. Add your chosen additives (bone meal, alfalfa meal, granular fertilizer) to the hole and mix into the soil. Then lay your tuber horizontally in the hole, with the eye pointing toward the stake. Cover it with soil, patting gently with your hands.



Plants should be 18"-24" apart, and planted in rows about 2-3 feet apart. In regions with regular rainfall and naturally moist soil, the dahlias are not watered until they sprout. However, in hot and dry climates, you may water LIGHTLY.

Growers without a lot of garden space may decide to grow dahlias in pots and other containers. Fill the pot with a good mix of garden and untreated topsoil, plant your tubers, tag them, and water lightly until sprouts emerge. The best types of dahlias for container gardening are the low-growing and/or dwarf varieties. You will need to fertilize more than you do in your row gardens. An all-purpose fertilizer for blooming plants works well for this.

## STAKING AND TYING UP YOUR DAHLIAS

As your dahlia plants grow, they will need to be secured in order to make sure they are able to support the weight of the flowers. This is usually done by tying them up to a stake with garden twine. Depending on the height of your plant, they may need to be tied up several times as they get taller. Stakes can be made of wood or metal, and should be a minimum of 4.5 – 5 feet tall.

*Our courses are written by dahlia enthusiasts, not necessarily scientists or horticulturalists. These enthusiasts are pleased to share their experience and best practices with you. Please keep in mind that there are a variety of opinions in the dahlia community and that different solutions and procedures work in different circumstances and locales. We urge you to participate in a [local society](#) where you will meet great growers with knowledge of growing dahlias in your area...and you'll have fun!*