

Dahlia

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Costas Lymbouris

Dahlia Origins

- Dahlia originated in Mexico and brought to Europe in 1789
- Today there are over 50,000 named varieties
- Maximum flowering needs min. 6 hours sun
- Do not like to be waterlogged, good drainage

Dahlia Are Easy to Grow

- Dahlia grow quickly
- Easy to propagate from division and Cuttings so you can multiply your best plants quickly
- Flower bearing plants from cuttings in 3-months
- Many have attractive foliage from June
- Long flowering period, summer & autumn flowers

Mid September



Dahlias & Canna Lilies
Costas Lymbouris

Treat as Annuals

- tubers can be bought cheaply £2-£4
- can be grown for a season to provide flowers from July to November, then discard

Treat as Hardy Perennials

- Can be treated as hardy perennials, leave in the ground to overwinter and emerge the following year
- Biggest threats to dahlia overwintering in the soil are; water logged soil and slugs
- If growing in pots;
 - move pots undercover and protect from freezing
 - or cover the pot with a lid or bag (sprinkle a few slug pellets), wrap in bubble wrap and move next to house walls

Treat as Hardy Perennials

- Dig up in autumn of 3rd year and store for overwintering as per tender perennials or leave until early spring

Note: I have had problems **digging** and moving dahlia in spring so no longer do this.

6-year old clump



Treat as Tender Perennials

- Can be treated as tender perennials, dig up and overwinter in a cool dry place
- Wait until a week or two after the foliage has frosted and blackened, cut back stems
 - Some growers have success storing plants after cuttings stems when foliage is still green and the plant in flower

Storage - Curing


- Prior to storage, dahlia tubers should be washed, allowed to dry under cover for 2 to 4 weeks exposed to the air (mine in the shed)
- During this 'curing' process, cuts heal over, the skin thickens and the tubers will store better without shrivelling
- Will also allow you to cut away any parts like stems that start rotting before you store them

3-Year Old Clump



Storing Dahlia Tubers (March)



A photograph showing two clumps of dahlia tubers and roots in a blue plastic container. The tubers are brown, textured, and somewhat bulbous. The roots are thin, fibrous, and have been cut off. Two white labels with yellow text are placed among the tubers. The label on the left reads 'Dahlia 'Art Deco'' and the label on the right reads 'Dahlia 'Art Deco''.

Cut off all roots
plant will make new ones
theses will rot away

Cut off, then
clump put in 5% bleach solution

Dahlia Anatomy

- Dahlia flowers grow from a stem attached to a “tuber” which has a collar at its neck



eyes
growth points
for new stems

Dahlia Anatomy

- New growth (stems) will only grow from an 'eye' in the collar that is located between the tuber and the stem



Newly Bought Packs

- Cut off old roots
- Discard any tubers with badly broken necks
- Soak in tepid water before planting
 - some growers add dilute fertiliser

Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers

- Can do this 4 to 6 weeks before last frost date (mid May ?) so start in April
- Tells you which tubers are viable
- Will give flowers a month earlier than planting bare tubers in the ground in mid May
- Provides cutting material (I start in March)

Pre sprouting Dahlia Tubers



Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers 6/3/22



Bottom right tuber 10/3/22



Softwood cuttings

- What follows is true for most softwood cuttings

Compost for "Soft" Cuttings

- Use a multipurpose compost for your cuttings (but not John Innes mixtures – too dense)
- Amended
 - 3 parts compost (sifted to **aerate**)
 - 1 part sharp sand
 - 1 part Perlite
- The above is 60% compost but 50 – 50 is often used

Cuttings

- As soon as a cutting is taken, it starts to die because its been removed from its “life support” system
- The quicker its put into soil the better its chances of survival
- Cuttings have no roots so need a well drained environment or will rot, compost goes stale
- This is the only time the compost should be saturated so the stem has access to water

"Soft" Cuttings

- I find cuttings taken in March, might need bottom heat to root
 - Can put them on a window shelf above a radiator
 - Cover pot with a plastic bag or dome, to reduce transpiration
 - Can move to a cold greenhouse once rooted
- Cuttings taken in April and May are raised in a cold greenhouse – no heat
 - Placed in a tub, misted several times a day for the first weeks and covered except for an hour morning and afternoon
- Root in about 3-weeks

Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers 15/3/22



Ready for Cuttings 15/3/22



Cuttings Taken 15/3/22



- “Wet - drench” compost
- Cuttings taken, used hormone rooting and pressed into compost
- Sprayed with water
- Will not be watered again for 2-3 weeks till rooted

Covered with a plastic bag
placed on a window shelf



"Soft" Cuttings

- Cuttings taken from plants in the ground from late June onwards, I root in bottles as I showed you for autumn cuttings.
- Placed in the shade but open to the elements
- Left to fend for themselves
- They will already be "hardened off" when rooted and can be moved into pots

Dividing Dahlia Tubers

- Plants with multiple stems, can pull the tubers apart using the stem
- If single stem need to cut the clump so each piece has both a tuber and a piece of collar with an eye

Take care not to remove eyes



Planting “Bare” Tubers

- Dahlia tubers showing no signs of growth can be planted into the ground upto 1 month before the last frost date; *wait for a dry period*
- Stems will take 3-4 weeks to reach the surface depending on temperature
- Plant 4-6 inch deep, helps to support the stems when windy and allows them to be overwintered in the ground. Work fertiliser in
- *Do not plant in soaking wet soil and only water sparingly (not needed if wet) after planting as bare tubers not in growth will rot when wet*

Planting “Sprouted” Dahlias

- Plant 4-6 inch deep, water in the plant sparingly, then only water when dry. Dahlia mainly need regular watering when in flower
- Plants first job is making leaves and roots
- Once the plant is 30-45cm tall, pinch back so that it has 3-4 pairs of leaves remaining. This encourages the plant to branch and send out a greater number of flowering stems
 - Not essential for short dahlias < 75cm

Feeding

- There is no consensus on fertiliser to use for dahlia plants, much will depend on your soil
 - I suggest a nitrogen rich fertiliser when planting
 - Work slow release fertiliser granules into the soil above the plant to help leaf growth, then mulch
 - Use a balanced fertiliser such as NPK 10-10-10 and feed once a month in the summer to prolong flowering
- I use a half strength feed every 2-weeks (do not exceed monthly strength in instructions)

Dahlias in Pots

- Dahlias grow well in pots
- They must have well drained compost, so work sand and/or Perlite into the growing medium
- Dahlias like a rich diet, so work a good quantity of slow release fertiliser into the growing medium
- Can supplement with a liquid feed once a month when they are flowering well
- If overwintering in pots, cover pot with a bag

Questions

