



J&L Garden Center

The All Season Gift and Garden Center

620 North 500 West Bountiful, Utah 801-292-0421

info@JLGardenCenter.com

www.JLGardenCenter.com

Dahlia Care

Whether you grow dahlias from seeds or from tubers, dahlias can furnish a vast array of colorful flowers from summer through fall. From a few wild Mexican and Guatemalan dahlia varieties, hybridizers have created a myriad of showy varieties of garden dahlias. The plants range in height from six inches to six feet tall.



The blossoms vary from one inch to over twelve inches in diameter. There is a wide variety of colors, styles and shapes available, perfect to add color and variety to your flower gardens. There are 42 species and about 20,000 cultivars of dahlia.

Varieties

Dahlias are available in many different colors, shapes, sizes (of both plants and flowers), and varieties. Dwarf dahlias are nice for borders while decorative dinner-plate dahlias grow tall, and need to be planted in the center or in the back of your flower garden.

Dahlias are available in many different colors, shapes, sizes (of both plants and flowers), and varieties.



Dinnerplate dahlias have huge blossoms. They are the "Queen of the Dahlias". The blossoms can grow more than twelve inches in diameter. Most dinnerplate dahlia varieties are a single color; red, pink, lavender, white, etc. However, some decorative dahlias are bi-colored and have a very large variation in color schemes.



Dahlia Classes

There are hundreds of varieties of Dahlia to choose from in many different classes. The classes of Dahlia are based on the size and form of their flowerheads.

FORMAL DECORATIVE Dahlias:

INFORMAL DECORATIVE Dahlias:

SEMI-CACTUS Dahlias:

STRAIGHT CACTUS Dahlias.

INCURVED CACTUS Dahlias:

LACINIATED Dahlias:

BALL Dahlias:

MINIATURE BALL Dahlias:

POMPON Dahlias:

STELLAR Dahlias:

WATERLILY Dahlias:

PEONY Dahlias:

ANEMONE Dahlias:

NOVELTY OPEN Dahlias:

NOVELTY FULLY DOUBLE Dahlias:

COLLARETTE Dahlias:

ORCHID Dahlias:

ORCHETTE Dahlias:

SINGLE Dahlias:

MIGNON SINGLE Dahlias:



For a complete description of each of these classes, please go the following link. <http://www.dahlia.org/guide/form.html>

Many garden clubs have dahlia growing contests to see who can grow the largest and best shaped dinnerplate dahlias. Dinnerplate dahlias grow quite tall, up to 5 to 6 feet tall. They usually need to be staked to protect them from the wind.

Cactus dahlias can also get very large blossoms, just not as large as the dinnerplate varieties. These types of dahlias are available in solid colors or in a vast array of bicolor flowers. The petals are very long and have a many different shapes. The petals may be long and narrow like a blade of grass or they may be long and have a spoon shaped tip. Cactus dahlias can be very rewarding to grow.



Ball Shaped dahlias are generally small plants and have small globe shaped flowers. The petals are small and very tight.



Collarette dahlias have a central disk surrounded by a collar of short ruffled or cupped petals and backed by a second collar of broad, flat petals. They are very interesting flowers to enjoy.



Anemone shaped dahlias have a central disk that is obscured by a fluffy ball of short, tubular petals and surrounded by one or two rows of longer, flat petals.



Pom Pom shaped dahlias are small, round balls of tightly rolled petals, usually less than two inches in diameter.



Planting

You can plant dwarf dahlias, by seed, as soon as the ground is warm enough to rototill. The warmer the soil, the faster the seeds will germinate and grow. If you plant dwarf dahlias from seedlings, wait until after the last frost to plant them - dahlias do not like cold weather.



Do not plant dahlia tubers outside until after the last spring frost. You can start your dahlia tubers inside in large containers, but wait until May to plant them outside. Dahlias like warm soil; not cold soil. They like full sun but will tolerate partial shade. They need to be planted in fertile, well drained soil. They do not like to be kept wet.

Dig a hole six to eight inches deep. Mix **Bumper Crop, Ferti Mulch**, or well rotted compost, in the soil. Do not use fresh manure.

Fertilize the soil, in and around the hole, with either **Bone Meal, 16-16-8 Multi-Purpose Fertilizer**, or **6-10-4 Flower Fertilizer**.

Place the tuber in the bottom of the hole and cover it with two or three inches of soil, do not completely fill in the hole. Place a stake (three to five feet long) next to the tuber when you plant it. If you try staking the dahlia plants later you may damage some of their roots, which may prevent the blossoms from getting as large as they could.

As the tuber begins to grow add soil to the hole so that you fill in the hole completely, or even have the soil slightly mounded around the plant, by mid summer. Dahlias need plenty of room to grow if you want large plants and large blossoms. Plant dinnerplate or cactus dahlias two or three feet apart.



Container Gardening

If you want to grow dahlias in containers, plant low growing, or dwarf dahlia varieties. If you would like to grow larger dahlias in containers the container must be quite large. For example you could put 3 full size dahlias in a "whiskey barrel" sized pot. Be sure to stake any dahlias that will reach 3 feet or taller.



Summer Care

Dahlias should be watered often enough to prevent the soil from drying out. Put mulch over the soil to help retain the moisture and help cool the soil from the extreme summer heat.

To promote shorter, bushier plants with better stems for cutting, pinch or cut the center shoot when the plant height reaches 18-20" tall.

Fertilize your dahlias every three to four weeks during the summer using either **6-10-4 Flower Fertilizer** or **Fer-**



tilome Blooming & Rooting Fertilizer. Dahlia roots are quite shallow so don't cultivate more than an inch deep around the plants. Pull the weeds rather than cutting them.

Picking Flowers

Cut dahlia flowers can last up to a week if they are properly cared for at picking time. Always cut dahlia flowers early in the morning or after sunset. Place the cut stems in very hot water immediately after cutting. Let the water gradually cool down. Once cut, do not let the stems run out of water; change or check the water daily.



Winter Care

Dig dahlia tubers after a frost has turned the leaves yellow. Do not let the tubers freeze severely or they will die. Either divide the tubers as you store them or divide them in the spring before you plant them. Dividing them in the spring is preferred because bigger tubers are easier to store.

Shake most of the soil off the tubers and dust them with **Soil and Bulb Dust**. This dust will kill both insects and diseases. Pack the tubers in sawdust, peatmoss or vermiculite.

Store them in wooden boxes, not inside sealed plastic bags. Dahlias need to be stored moist, but not too wet or too dry. Keep them above freezing during the winter and let them warm up a little in the spring before you divide them.

Check them occasionally during the winter. If they are too wet, let them dry out. If they are too dry, moisten them a little.



Insects & Diseases

Aphids, thrips, and spidermites are three pests that like dahlias. Many butterfly larvae (caterpillars) also feed on dahlia leaves.

If you are enjoying butterflies in your garden you may want to tolerate a few leaves with holes rather than try to control the caterpillars.

Unfortunately you do not have a choice when it comes to thrips and spidermites. If you want your plants to grow and bloom you have to control these insects.

Thrips are slender pests with fringed wings. Thrips damage plants by puncturing the leaves and sucking out the juices. Although thrips rarely kill dahlias, they can affect the appearance by causing stippled leaves, leaf drop and stunted growth. Thrips also burrow inside blossoms, preventing them from opening properly.



Systemic Rose & Flower Care is one good way to prevent insects and fertilize the plants at the same time. Unfortunately, once you get some of these pests the only way to get rid of them is to spray with an insecticide. Try not to spray the blossoms, just spray the leaves and stems.



Systemic insecticides such as **Orthene** or **Merit** are good insecticides to use to kill aphids, thrips, and spider-mites.

Insecticidal Soap or **Eight Insect Control** (organic insecticides) will kill some of these insects (aphids & some spidermites) but not all of them - thrips are usually inside the blossoms and almost impossible to kill organically.



If you want to use something more natural, try washing off the plants with a strong stream of water, it works to a degree on both aphids and spidermites but not on thrips.

Thrips are attracted to yellow sticky cards. Placing yellow sticky cards around susceptible plants, just above the plants, will help detect thrips before damage to plants becomes apparent. In addition, it is difficult to see the tiny thrips on the plant. Thrips may be more readily seen on traps than by tapping infested flowers over a sheet of paper.



Snails & Slugs- They will begin eating your dahlias before they even show through the ground. Slugs and snails will eat the new sprouts, holes in the leaves, and they will even eat the stalk. Start baiting 2 weeks after planting and continue to bait throughout the season.



Earwigs-- They are mainly a nuisance, while eating many petals of the blooms, they are really not hurting the dahlia plant itself. They crawl in daily and are very hard to control.



Powdery mildew is the most common disease affecting dahlias. Don't sprinkle the leaves, especially at night, and you might be lucky and prevent most disease problems. **Infuse, Fungaway** or **Sytemic Fungicide** are good sprays to use to control most dahlia diseases.



Serenade Powdery Mildew Spray in an organic way to get rid of powdery mildew. This is a good, safe product that is fairly effective without harming beneficial insects.



More Resources

- <http://extension.usu.edu/boxelder/files/uploads/Dahlias.pdf>
- <http://www.dahlia.org/>
- <http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening/scene3dbf.html>
- <http://www.dahlia.org/index.php?page=growing-dahlias>
- <http://www.dahlias.net/dahwebpg/Disease/Disease.htm>



Dahlia Growing Guide by Cornell Univeristy

There are hundreds of varieties of Dahlia to choose from. Below are some of the more common classes of Dahlia, based on the size and form of their flowerheads.

Ball-flowered cultivars have rounded, dense, 2- to 8-inch-wide blooms composed of wide, slightly curled petals.

The flowers sometimes have flattened tops. Plants grow 3 to 4.5 feet tall.

Pompom-flowered cultivars have rounded, 2- to 4-inch-wide, globular blooms composed of wide, rounded petals. The outer petals are wholly curled, the inner petals are often gently curled. Plants grow 2.5 to 4 feet tall.

Collarette cultivars have unusual 2- to 6-inch-wide blooms that consist of an outer ring of nearly flat, large petals, and an inner ring of short, small petals that surround the central disk as a “collar.” Plants grow 2.5 to 4 feet tall.

Fimbriated cultivars have large, 6- to 8-inch-wide blooms with split petals that give the flowers a fringed look. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

Formal decorative cultivars have large, 2- to 10-inch-wide flattened blooms composed of wide, flat petals. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

Informal decorative cultivars have 2- to 10-inch-wide (or larger) blooms comprised of wide petals that may be curled or twisted to give the overall bloom a casual, full look. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

Anemone-flowered cultivars have blooms that consist of a ring of flat outer petals and an inner ring of tubular inner petals. The blooms resemble anemone blooms, hence the common name. Plants grow 2 to 4 feet tall.

Orchid-flowered cultivars have exotic and unusual, 2- to 4-inch-wide, star-like blooms composed of a single row of tightly curled petals. Plants grow 3.5 to 4.5 feet tall.

Peony-flowered cultivars have 2- to 6-inch-wide blooms composed of two to many rows of wide, rounded petals that often gently curve inward. Plants grow 3 to 4 feet tall.

Single-flowered cultivars bear daisy-like, 1- to 6-inch-wide blooms. The flowers consist of a single row of petals around a central disk. Plants grow 1.5 to 2 feet tall.

Waterlily cultivars bear 4- to 8-inch-wide blooms that consist of flat, cupped, wide petals that resemble water lilies. Plants grow 3 to 4.5 feet tall.

Straight cactus-flowered cultivars have 2- to 8-inch wide blooms composed of downward curled petals that are arranged in either a flat or recurved manner. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

Semi-cactus-flowered cultivars have 2- to 10-inch-wide (or larger) blooms composed of petals that are curled for up to one half their total length. The petals may be arranged in a flat, incurved, or recurved manner. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

Incurved cactus-flowered cultivars have 2- to 8-inch-wide blooms composed of curled, nearly tubular petals that curve inward. The outer petals are only gently incurved, and the inner petals are increasingly incurved as they near the center. Plants grow 4 to 5.5 feet tall.

For more information about the different classes of dahlias, please go to the following link.

<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening/scene3dbf.html>

