

Preparing and Storing Dahlia Tubers

Cutting down plants

- Plants will continue to bloom until the first frost
- I tag my plants before I start cutting down and digging. This is a good idea if you want to keep track of varieties for planting next year and for sharing with others.
- When you are ready to cut down the plant, cut off the stalk leave 6-12" above the ground.
- It is actually good to leave the tubers in the ground for at least 1 week before digging. It is not a problem to leave for 3-4 weeks. You just have to make sure the ground doesn't freeze and it is not a lot of fun digging out tubers in 35F temperatures.



Removing tubers from the ground

- Use a long handled round point shovel. Insert about 12" from the stalk using a gentle prying motion.
- Repeat on all sides in order to loosen all of the soil around the tuber.
- Once the soil is loosened on all sides you can pry the clump up with the shovel and gently lift the clump by the stalk being careful not to break the necks of the tubers.
- Shake the clump to remove the dirt.
- I hose off the tubers.
- You must allow the tubers to dry in a frost free area overnight. Do NOT let dry on cement. This draws too much moisture out.

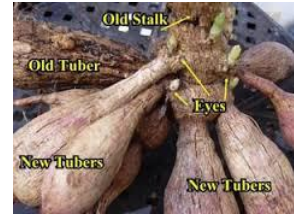


Treating dahlia tubers for winter storage

- Many people treat their tubers with a fungicide to kill any fungus or bacteria that might be lurking on the tubers and will prevent its spread during storage.
- Common fungicides:
 - Bleach solution – one cup bleach to 3 gallons of water. Soak for 10 – 15 minutes.
 - Powdered sulfur – place in bag, add tubers, and shake.
 - Ban Rot – ½ cup powder to 5 gallons of water. Soak for 30 seconds. **Note: this chemical is toxic and should be handled with care!**
 - Many don't do anything.

Dividing (minimally), and preparing for storage

- I divide my tubers in the Spring. It is much easier to see the eyes which is critical for dividing.
- Trim all the small roots off.
- Divide the clump in half by cutting through the stem. While the tubers are designed to go into dormancy, the stems are not and will rot. Dividing the stem in half will allow it to dry out and reduce the chances of crown rot in the tubers.
- Trim most of the stem off. Make sure to leave the crown intact.



Storing dahlia tubers

- There are a variety of storage methods. I have found success storing in perforated Ziploc bags.
- The Ziploc bag can be perforated using a wallpaper cutting tool called a Paper Tiger.
- The tubers are placed directly in the Ziploc bag.
- The bags can then be stored in a cardboard box. I have a lot of tubers so I store the bags in a large Rubbermaid container with holes cut in the lid.
- Advantages of this method:
 - It is very CLEAN
 - Requires very little space
 - Bags can be labeled eliminating need to label individual tubers. I put tag in bag.
 - It is easy to check tubers during the winter



PaperTiger
Wallpaper ...

Score the bag with this tool. A few passes zig-zagged back and forth

Winter storage environment

- It is very important that your storage area does NOT freeze. The ideal temperature for storing dahlias is between 40-50F. Storage temperatures should be below 60F.
- Check your tubers after the first week of storage. If the Ziploc bags show condensation, open them, dry, and leave open for a day or two. Close and put back into storage.
- Check them periodically (once a month) to make sure they are not rotting or drying out. Remove rotted tubers so they don't cause more to rot. If the tubers are dry and shriveling, you can spray a little water in the bag.
- The ideal storage location would be an old root cellar.
- Most of us will have to make due with a less efficient location. The crawl space under a house or an unheated but insulated garage or basement.

