

# Get ready to plant Dahlias!

## Option #1 – Start your tubers in pots

- Some gardeners start tubers indoors 1-2 months ahead to get a jump on the season.
- Use LC1 professional growing mix. You want your potting soil to be moist. I mix soil and water in a 5 gallon bucket to achieve correct moisture level.
- You don't want the soil too wet. Moisten until the soil holds together when you squeeze in your hand. If water drips from soil it is too wet.
- Place the soil in pot sized to hold the tuber. Make sure pot has drainage holes.
- I like using 1 quart clear plastic deli containers to plant my tubers. Drill holes in bottom. I buy at Gordon Foods.
- Plant as you would in the ground with eye pointing up with crown just above soil level.
- Place pots in a bright, sunny location. You can put under grow lights.
- Don't water during the first few weeks. Too much water will cause tuber to rot.
- Your potted tubers will grow stem and roots (deli containers let you see the roots).
- In the warmer weather of May (in Michigan) you can start to acclimate your plants by moving them outside during the day but bring them back in at night (garage works).
- Plant in the ground when soil outside is 60°F. Follow Option #2 instructions.



## Option #2 – Plant tubers directly in the ground

- Don't be in a hurry to plant; dahlias will struggle in cold soil. Ground temperature should reach 60°F. Wait until all danger of spring frost is past before planting. (Try planting them a little after the tomato plants go in.)
- Select a planting site with full sun. Dahlias grow more blooms with 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight.
- Dahlias thrive in rich, well-drained soil. The pH level of your soil should be 6.5-7.0, slightly acidic.
- Plant your dahlias 2-3 feet apart.
- Plant tuber with the eye facing up, about 6 to 8 inches deep. The crown should be below soil level.
- Plant your potted tubers in the same manner with the crown below soil level.



### Stake your dahlias

- Medium to large flowering dahlias will require support. Place stakes (5-6 feet tall) at planting time and tie stems to them as the plants grow. Most dahlias grown for cut flowers reach 4-6 feet so staking is important.



### Care after planting

- Do not water the tubers right after planting; this encourages rot. Wait until the stems are 4-6" tall before watering.
- Do not cover the dahlias with mulch or bark.
- After dahlias are established, provide a deep watering 2 to 3 times a week.
- Don't forget to label your plantings, or make a map of what dahlia variety is planted where, if you want to keep track of your dahlias. This is good to do if you plan on participating in dahlia exhibitions or sharing your tubers with other growers.



### Fertilizing

- I like Osmocote plus Smart-Release (time released fertilizer). I use when planting. This is an all-purpose fertilizer that will get your plants off to a healthy start. Do NOT over fertilize, especially with nitrogen, or you risk small/no blooms, weak tubers, or rot.
- Remember once the plant is established your dahlias will benefit from a low-nitrogen fertilizer such as a 5-10-10 or 10-20-20. You may want to try this at the end of July and early August.

