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GARDENS®

10 tips for growing better **DAHLIAS**



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Growing beautiful dahlias is easier than you think. Proper planting and care will result in an abundance of beautiful blooms for you to enjoy in your garden and summer bouquets. Use these strategies to boost your dahlia growing success.

Select the **Sizes**, **Types** and **Colors** that best fit your gardening goals and landscape design.

Planning Guide for Dahlias

TYPES OF DAHLIAS

BEDDING DAHLIAS

- Grown from seeds or cuttings
 - Treated like annuals
- Will form tuberous root over summer
 - Often have inconsistent results when grown from these the following year
- Various colors, 12-18" tall

SINGLE (Bishop of Dover shown)

- Single row of petals
- Prominent center
- Great for pollinators
- 3-5" (7.5cm - 12.7cm) flowers
- Typically 2-3' (.6m - .9m) tall

PEONY FLOWERED (Bishop of Llandaff shown)

- 2 or more layers of petals
- Prominent center
- Great for pollinators
- 3-5" (7.5cm - 12.7cm) flowers
- Typically 2-3' (.6m - .9m) tall

COLLARETTE (Pooh shown)

- Inner and outer row of petals different lengths
- Open center
- 3-4" (7.5cm - 10cm) flowers
- Usually less than 30" (.76m) tall
- Great in bouquets

ANEMONE (Lifestyle shown)

- Several rows of petals
- Pincushion of tubular petals in the center
- 3-4" (7.5cm - 10cm) flowers
- Great for bouquets
- Usually less than 30" (.9m) tall

POMPON (Moor Place shown)

- Long lasting
- Perfectly round, tightly rolled petals
- 1-2" (2.5cm - 5cm) flowers
- 36-40" (.9m - 1m) tall

BALL (Zundert Mystery Fox shown)

- Long lasting
- Perfectly round, tightly rolled petals
- 3-4" (7.5cm - 10cm) flowers
- 40" (1m) tall

DECORATIVE BORDER (Melody Pink Allegro shown)

- Gallery border dahlias 15-20" (38cm - 51cm) tall
- Melody border dahlias 24-36" (61cm - 76cm) tall
- 2-5" (5cm - 12.7cm) flowers

DECORATIVE (Labyrinth shown)

- Widest range of colors and styles
- Flat or slightly curved petals
- 4-8" (10cm - 20cm) flowers
- Typically 3-4' (.9m - 1.21m) tall

Longfield Gardens

Longfield Gardens provides high quality flower bulbs and perennials to home gardeners. We offer plants for every region and every season, from tulips and daffodils to dahlias, caladiums and amaryllis.

Longfield Gardens is in business to help you enjoy a more beautiful yard and garden. Our family-owned company is located in Lakewood, N.J. and we have more than 80 years of combined experience in the horticulture industry. Selling bulbs and perennials is our passion as well as our livelihood.

We take pride in our products and in our service. As part of our commitment to quality products, we maintain our own trial garden for testing varieties and developing combinations. We also produce how-to articles, videos and blog posts so you'll have the information and inspiration you need to create a beautiful yard and garden.

Shop our online store at **longfield-gardens.com** and let us help you grow a more beautiful garden.



CACTUS & SEMI CACTUS (Nut d' Eté shown)

- Partially or fully rolled petals
- 4-8" (10cm - 20cm) flowers
- 3-4' + (.9m - 1.2m+) tall

WATERLILY (Onesta shown)

- Relatively flat with closed center
- Rows of flat or slightly curved petals
- 3-5" (7.5cm - 12.7cm) flowers
- Typically 2-3' (.6m - .9m) tall

DINNERPLATE (Penhill Dark Monarch)

- 8"+ (20cm+) blooms
- 4' + (1.2m+) tall
- Showy flowers, only need a few for in impressive bouquet

KNOW YOUR DAHLIAS

- Tuberous root (often referred to as a tuber) with growing point (eye) at tip of tuber/base of stem
- When purchasing dahlias, you may receive single tuberous root or several radiating from the stem
- Here are a Few Tips to Help Increase Success

START EARLY FOR A LONG SEASON OF FLOWERS

- For earlier blooms, start your dahlias indoors about 4-6 weeks before the last spring frost.
 - Use 1 or 2-gallon pots with drainage holes
 - Fill pots with damp growing mix and cover the tip of the tuberous root with 1-2" of soil.
 - Move to a warm location for sprouting
 - Water sparingly until sprouts emerge, which can take 2-4 weeks.
 - Move to a sunny window or under artificial lights when green appears.

- Harden off transplants before moving outdoors
 - Place in a shaded location, increasing the amount of sunlight the plants receive each day

PLANT OUTDOORS IN LATE SPRING

- Plant dahlias after the danger of frost has passed and soil is warm.
- This is the same time you typically plant tomatoes
- Grow dahlias as you would tomatoes
 - Plant in sunny location with fertile, well-drained soil
 - Amend soil as needed and loosen the soil in the planting area at least 12" deep. This encourages a robust root system.
 - Plant so the top of the tuber (eye) is no more than 1-2" below the soil surface. It can take several weeks for the first sprouts to emerge, but once they do, the plants grow very quickly.

GROWING DAHLIAS IN ZONES 9 & 10

- Plant in September for November and December flowers
- Cut back when yellow in December through January
- Plants will sprout in February and flower in April and May

GROWING DAHLIAS WHERE SUMMERS ARE HOT

- Provide some shade midday to late afternoon
- Grow heat tolerant varieties
- Mulch



About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including *Can't Miss Small Space Gardening*, the *Midwest Gardener's Handbook 2nd Edition* released 2022, and *Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy*. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and Instant Video, including the latest *Food Gardening for Everyone* DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

Visit Melinda's website,
melindamyers.com

PROPER SPACING

- Good air circulation encourages strong, healthy growth.
- Space border dahlias 15" apart from the center of one plant to the next.
- Taller types should be spaced at least 18-24" on center.

PINCH FOR FULLER GROWTH AND MORE BLOOMS

- Pinched plants produce more side branches, resulting in sturdier growth and lots more flowers.
- Prune when dahlias are 10-12" tall
- Use scissors or sharp bypass pruners to remove the top 2 or 3 sets of leaves. Pinching will set the plants back by a week or two, but they will come back quickly.

STAKE TO AVOID BROKEN STEMS

- Plan ahead so you are prepared when its time to stake the dahlias
- Best to stake dahlias that grow more than 3' tall and those with large flowers
- Staking helps plants stay upright, minimizes damage from wind and rain, keeps flowers more visible and makes it easier to deadhead.
- Stake at planting or soon after to avoid damaging the tuberous roots.
- Support individual plants when only growing a small number of plants or the plants are intermixed with other plantings
 - Wood stakes 1½" diameter that are 6' long
 - Sink the bottom 12" in the soil
 - Secure the plant to the post with twine

- Bamboo poles 1" in diameter and 5-6' tall
 - Poles on either side of plant or 4 poles surrounding the plant
 - Secure twine around the poles and connect through the center
- Rebar 6' long
 - Secure individual plant to single rebar post
- Round tomato cages
 - Remove legs
 - Set upside down around the plant
 - Anchor the tower in place
- Texas Tomato Cages or Vertex Tomato Towers

LARGE PLANTINGS

- Use heavy duty T-posts or 2" square hardwood posts
- Install stakes at each corner
- Set additional posts every 3-4'
- Wrap twine around the post and proceed to the next one
- Continue until the bed is enclosed
- Place 1st row of twine at 12-18" above the ground
- Subsequent rows should be at 12" intervals

WATERING

- Consistent moisture means more flowers and healthier plants
- Water deeply to promote a robust root system
- Apply water directly to the soil whenever possible
 - Soaker hoses, drip irrigation or watering wand
- Mulch the soil with leaves, evergreen needles or other organic mulch

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FERTILIZATION

- Some debate, but dahlias perform best when well fed
- Enrich the soil with compost
- Apply a low nitrogen, slow-release fertilizing at planting
- Make second application as directed
- Many dahlia gardeners make several liquid fertilizer applications every 3-4 weeks
 - Check label for rates and timing

DEADHEADING

- Removing spent flowers as soon as possible to minimize pest and disease problems
- Snip just below the faded flower or better yet, back to a main stem
 - For longer and stronger growth
 - Repeat as needed
- Use sharp snips or bypass pruners for a clean cut

MISS A WEBINAR?
Melinda's Webinars are Available On Demand!
WATCH NOW

COMMON INSECTS AND DISEASES

- Healthy plants have few insect and disease problems
- Monitor and manage if and when problems appear

SLUGS & SNAILS

- Like it cool, dark and damp
- Feed at night - eating holes in leaves
- Beer traps do work
- Sluggo and other organic slug and snail products
- Active ingredient is Iron Phosphate
 - Not harmful to pollinators, birds and toads

EARWIGS

- Feed on leaves, buds and flowers
- They do feed on other insect pests
- Traps
 - Folks in Hamilton, Canada taught me this technique
 - Fill the cardboard core of a paper towel roll with straws

- Wrap the outside with packing tape to weather proof
 - ❖ Leave ends open
- Lift in morning - covering both ends
- Dump earwigs into soapy water

TARNISHED PLANT BUGS

- Small flattened insect with piercing, sucking mouth parts
- Cause misshapen flowers that don't open properly
- Parasitic wasps help control this pest
- Overwinter in leaf litter
 - Keep garden weeded
- Summit Year-Round Spray Oil
 - Can help manage the problem

THRIPS

- Very small insects with file-like mouthparts
- Scratch leaf and flower surfaces and lap up sap
- Feeding causes distorted leaves and flowers
 - Can weaken plants and spread disease
- More of a risk on heat and drought stressed plants

SPIDER MITES

- A relative of spiders, not a true insect
- They have piercing-sucking mouth parts
- Feeding causes speckling and leaves can eventually yellow and drop
- More common in hot, dry weather
- Strong blast of water
- **Summit Year-Round Spray Oil**, if needed

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT

- Common during cloudy, wet weather
 - Flower buds turn brown or black and fail to open
 - Remove and dispose of infected plants parts immediately

POWDERY MILDEW

- Occurs with fluctuations in humidity
- More common in droughty summers
- The disease covers the leaves, blocking sunlight and causing leaf drop
- Reduce the risk:
 - Proper spacing for air flow and sufficient sunlight reaching plants
 - Avoid excess nitrogen fertilizer
 - Lush growth is more susceptible
 - **Summit Year-Round Spray Oil** can protect uninfected leaves
- Remove infected leaves and clean area end of season

HARVESTING & DISPLAYING DAHLIA FLOWERS

Managing Dahlias for Maximum Bloom

- The more flowers you cut, the more flowers you'll get
- Harvesting flowers twice a week will encourage a plentiful supply of blooms
- If you want flowers with long stems, be willing to sacrifice some side buds
 - Cut flowers in early morning or late evening
 - Flowers should be fully opened - they will not continue to open once picked
 - The back of the flower head should be stiff
 - Back petals should stay in place when rubbed
- Conditioning the flowers
 - Method 1
 - Harvest and immediately place the stems in 2-3" of very warm (160-180°F) water for one hour
 - Do not overcrowd the stems as trapped steam can damage the delicate petals
 - Remove and place in clean, fresh water
 - Method 2
 - Dip stems into boiling water for 7-10 seconds
 - Keep flowers away from the steam
 - Place stems in bucket of cool water and allow to rest for several hours before arranging
- Dahlia flowers have a short vase life but are well worth the effort

DIGGING AND STORING DAHLIAS FOR WINTER

- In Zones 3 to 7
 - Treat them like annuals
 - Or dig, cure and store indoors for winter
- Zone 7 gardeners may be able to keep dahlias alive in the garden over winter
 - Good drainage
 - Thick mulch
 - Not 100% in all parts of Zone 7
- Zones 8 to 10 can leave dahlias in the garden over winter
 - In fall cut the plants back to several inches above the soil surface
 - Watch for new growth the following spring

Contact Diggers Hotline or your local underground utility locating service BEFORE you start digging - It's a FREE service

In Wisconsin file online at diggershotline.com or anywhere in the U.S., including Wisconsin, call 811 at least 3 business days before putting the first shovel in the ground. Once your request is received, Diggers Hotline (or your local locating service) contacts all the appropriate underground utilities. The utility's locators will mark the location of the underground utilities in the work area. Avoid digging near the marks to reduce the risk of damage, personal injury or even death.



UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS

Check often as more appearances and webinars continue to be added.

February 17th -19th

NARI Milwaukee Spring Home Improvement Show

[More Information](#)

February 22nd Webinar

[Grow Beautiful Water Gardens Free of Invasive Plants](#)

March 1st Webinar

[Learn the Basics on How and When to Prune Shrubs](#)

March 4th

[Planning, Planting and Caring for Your Garden \(2 presentations\)](#)

[More Information](#)

March 8th Webinar

[Grow Your Own Flowers for Bouquets in Containers, Raised Beds and Gardens](#)

March 11th

University of Illinois Master Gardener's Home, Lawn and Garden Day

[More Information](#)

March 15th Webinar

[Create an Oasis On a Deck, Patio or Balcony](#)

March 18th

Spring into Gardening

[More Information](#)

March 22nd Webinar

[In a Pot, You Can Grow a Lot!](#)

March 25th

2023 Outagamie Co. Master Gardener Association Garden Conference

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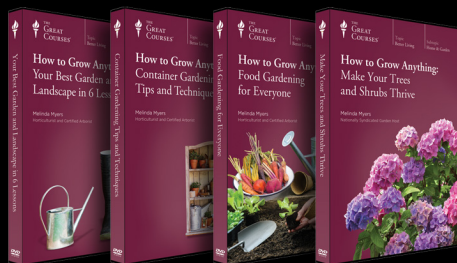
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MONTHLY GARDENING CHECKLISTS & MORE

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