



GROW DAZZLING DAHLIAS

INCLUDING STRATEGIES FOR COLD-CLIMATE
SHORT SEASON GROWING

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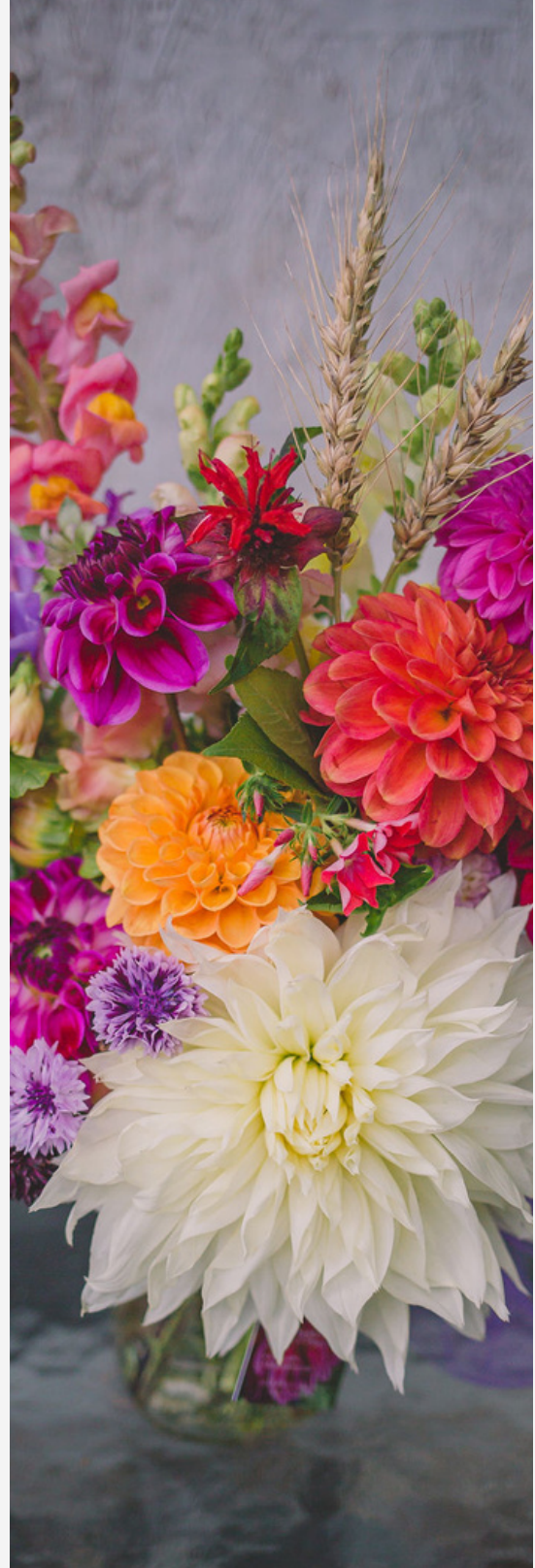
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Welcome Dahlia Lover!

Well, I'm assuming you love dahlias since you are reading this guide. I've grown dahlias for nearly 25 years, the last 10 completely field-grown in Alaska's short season cold climate. It's also only been this last decade spent as a flower farmer / florist.

The florist part was added as I create award winning designs, bouquets and arrangements with the dahlias and other flowers we grow here on my flower farm.

I'm so excited you are here. I LOVE to share my dahlia affinity, the story of how I began my floral business, and living the farming lifestyle. In my opinion there is no better way to bloom and share the miracle and vibrancy of life than with flowers, especially dahlias!

In this guide you will learn: Our dahlia love story. About preparing your grow space. When to plant for early blooming. Plant spacing/depth etc. Watering advice. How to get the most blooms per plant. Pest/bug control tips. Weed management. Dividing & Storing practices and so much more...


My Dahlia Love Story



It all began with handfuls of road side dahlias sold by the honor system and a cute little boy. The boy being my son coming home from kindergarten with a spindly dahlia plant to give me since the honor system farm quit business. My son was afflicted with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. I was told we'd be lucky if he lived past 14 years old. So when I learned dahlias grow more tubers you can divide every year, I was overjoyed and determined I'd grow them and thought what better way to have something from my boy long after he was gone. He surprised us all and graduated high school but sadly passed 3 years later from complications. He was 21.

Although I knew he would most likely die young, nothing prepared me for the raw emotional and physical crashing waves of grief that I felt and still feel at times. I've never cried so much in my life! That summer after he passed not knowing what to do with myself I grew all his dahlias, his gift to me. And boy is it a gift! I was so deeply moved by his love for me with every flower that bloomed that I couldn't get enough!

Dahlias are vivid bright reminders that quality of life outweighs quantity. -My son's life example. That year of growing dahlias also planted a seed of starting my own flower farm to blooming fruition. A dream came true. That I now get to share with you.



*Dahlias are vivid
bright reminders that
quality of life
outweighs quantity.*

FLOWERS AREN'T VEGETABLES

Growing up in rural Alaska, being raised homestead style where we grew our own food. Then later meeting my farmer husband where we've built our home with two gorgeous kids on his family's vegetable farm I've seen with my own eyes and experienced exactly what it takes to successfully grow pretty much anything in a short growing window of a cold climate.

However, I'll tell you right now flowers aren't vegetables.

It takes just as much work and in some cases like dahlias even a bit more to bring a floral crop to market successfully.

Further, growing dahlias in zone 3 has the challenge of an incredibly short growing window, (only about 90-120 days give or take) coupled with that most varieties don't start blooming until 70 days after planting.

But it can be done with much success. All you need to get started is a good plan, a sunny spot to grow them and a little water. As you read this guide be sure to read the "Snips & Tips" boxes for tricks of the trade.

www.alldahliadup.com





HERE WE GO!

Here in Alaska and most other snowy cold climates all the seed sowing, starting and planting steps are still the same as anywhere else except everything is started indoors under lights, in a heated greenhouse or at least a sunny window seal as the ground is still frozen with a blanket of snow on it.

On the other hand fall comes fast around here. As early as the first to second week of September we can get our first hard frost. Although several flowers can handle a few frosts, the mighty dahlia can't.

Also, farming isn't home gardening and it's definitely not a hobby. Owning and operating a farm is a business. I've done both. Either way no matter what scope of dahlia growing you do or want to do I've detailed my hardy weather growing experience into this guide for you to have as reference and to use for growing the most dazzling dahlias year after year.



PREPARING YOUR GARDEN SOIL

Preparing your dahlia garden soil.

Although dahlias can be grown in large deep containers for the purpose and my expertise we will cover outdoor flower beds and larger gardens. Which are are easiest to prepare with tractor and tiller, but any push tiller works too.

Dahlias can pretty much grow in any type of soil but they do need good drainage.

Getting your soil tested is the best practice for amending your soil with exactly what it needs, but a good low nitrogen fertilizer is a good place to start.



Snips & Tips:

Dahlia have shallow roots and get rather tall leaving them fragile in the wind.

Keep this in mind when planning where to put your dahlia babies.

Misty Vanderweele

WHEN TO START FOR EARLIER BLOOM TIME

Start indoors, preferably a heated greenhouse or indoors under lights mid-March or early April. For years I started them in my southern facing living room windows. Be sure the tuber eyes are pointing up when planted. Eyes shown below.

Transplant outside around Memorial weekend depending on where you live in Alaska or other cold climate. Cover at night if you fear frost. You can also transplant in the first week of June or until the fear of frost is gone. Keeping in mind the sooner you can get them in the ground the sooner they'll start producing blooms.

For the most part we use 4-6 inch pots to start our tubers. They take up less space and fit nicely into a regular planting tray.





Another starting method you might want to try is what is referred to as lasagna style...tubers started in rows in low planting trays. If this method is used wait until mid-April so the plants don't get to tall and spindly.

*For longer tubers we use either a ziplock plastic bag or 3- 5 gallon containers filled only about half way with potting medium with no added fertilizer like Sunshine Agrigate 4 or ProMix. Remember we are going to plant outside, not keep them in the container so filling all the way full isn't necessary. *Do not water until plants are growing nicely and have at least 3 sets of leaves. Please keep in mind over watering can cause the tuber to rot.



Snips & Tips:

Wear surgical gloves for light but dirty jobs such as planting and weeding for protecting your hands and keeping them clean. Works like a charm.



PLANT SPACING DEPTH ETC.

By mid May your starts should have good roots for transplanting. It's time to harden off your dahlia baby plants before planting them out in the garden.

Dig a hole 6 to 8 inches in depth, put 1/8 cup bone meal in the hole. (small handfull) every 10-18 inches spacing.

At planting time be sure to stake up your dahlia plants or at least very soon after.

We use an elaborate criss cross for corraling method for our long 100ft beds. Wood stakes work well but be careful not to stab into the tuber.



Snips & Tips:

**LABEL AT
PLANTING TIME**





THE SECRETS TO MORE BLOOMS PER-PLANT

Dahlias bloom until the first hard frost takes them so why not get the most flowers as you can?

Just like pruning a shrub or a flowering tree is beneficial so is dead-heading. For those not familiar with the term.

Deadheading is simply removing any blooms that are done blooming. Just like deadheading cutting stems to bring in the houses will signal the plant to keep blooming.

Dahlias are one of those flowers that come back more and more after every harvest. We harvest every 3-4 days to ensure ample blooms. You can do the same.

Don't be afraid to cut them to enjoy the house.

THE SECRETS TO MORE BLOOMS PER-PLANT

There is one more secret for having the most flowers as you can on each dahlia plant and it's probably the hardest to do.

Way back in the beginning after the plant has 4-5 leaf sets, pinch down either using your fingers or flower snip to right above the 3rd set.

What pinching back does is force the plant to send out more branches. New branches will soon sprout where you made the cut.

More branches equals more blooms automatically.

Another tip I want make sure you are also aware of is when you are harvesting flowers to bring in the house or give to a neighbor, you want to cut as far down into the plant as you can for nice long stems for arranging. This step also forces the plant to keep sending up long stems.

• Pinching • Water Schedule • Deadheading • Harvesting
Regularly

Are Key for More Blooms Per-Plant.



TASK SCHEDULES =HAPPY FLOWERS



WATERING

WATER DEEPLY EVERY 3-4 DAYS



FEEDING

COMPOST TEA WEEKLY * FERTILIZE
MONTHLY



PEST MANAGEMENT

WEEKLY STARTING BEFORE A PROBLEM



WEED CONTROL

ROTATE DEPENDING ON SIZE OF GARDEN



WATERING ADVICE

The best advice for watering is get on a schedule, every 3 or 4 days is ideal unless the weather is very hot. For Greenhouse starts *Waiting for sprouting through the dirt to water. Once planted in the ground, deep watering every 3-4 days is recommended. On our smaller garden we use soaker hose. All other growing areas we use a drip watering system.

FERTILIZING ADVICE

Every 4 weeks, or 2-3 times a season we apply a very low nitrogen fertilizer.

They start getting weekly compost tea foliar feedings once they have 3 sets of leaves or more.

-Folar means applying the tea to the leaves with a watering can or a sprayer.

We make our own. But know there is a ton of information online about compost tea to reference.





WEED CONTROL

We use black landscape fabric aka: weed barrier for our walkways between the dahlia beds. Weed Pressure can get our of hand quickly and swallow up flowers. Weeding dahlias is best done by hand as to not hurt their stalks.

PEST MANAGMENT

The common pest pressure we deal with mostly are from aphids, thrips and slugs.

We spray alternating between insecticidal soap and neem oil for aphids.

Monterey Insect Spray for thrips.

An incredible safe for pets product, Sluggo Plus for the wonderful slugs that show up when it's wet and rainy, usually by August.

Although we do sprinkle the product at planting and few other times throughout the summer.





SAVING DAHLIA TUBERS

Just as there are over 400+ different dahlia varieties there are numerous ways and techniques for saving dahlia tubers for next seasons planting.

I learned real quick in the beginning that this process is a ton of work and must be done in a prompt and important manner to ensure that the dahlias don't get frozen into the ground. As well as once dug being speedy with the washing and dividing makes sure the tubers don't dehydrate and shrivel.

It's truly been a costly and often times a tearful education.

Ultimately so worth it in the end for us.



Snips & Tips:

Don't let digging up dahlia tubers hinder you from growing these incredible flowers. If you are only growing a handful simply purchase new tubers every year.



WHEN THE FROST COMES

When the frost comes and turns the dahlia plants to something that resembles cooked spinach its time to begin the arduous steps for a timely clean-up.

It's Go Time! There is no time to delay. Winter is coming and it just might come sooner than later.

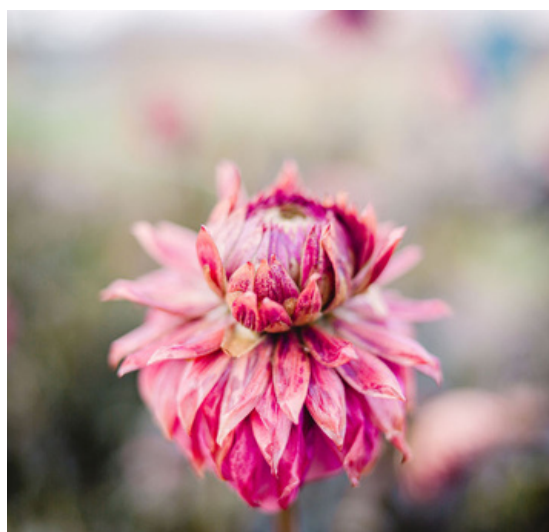
We Label, Dig, Wash, Divide, Dry, Package, & Store in this order.

I call it Misty's LDW-DDPS steps for digging up and saving dahlia tubers.



Snips & Tips:

Be sure to label your dahlia plants BEFORE frost as they are impossible to identify what they are when the frost kills back the leaves.





THE LDW-DDPS TUBER SAVING SYSTEM

Step L

Label all your plants BEFORE you cut down the plant. I can't express this enough if you want to keep your dahlias identified. It's hard to tell one tuber from the others come spring.

Step D

After cutting down the plant 3 inches above the ground using a pitch fork, **DIG** up the Tuber Clump about 10 inches from the cut stalk. Go around the stalk several times making a circle around the plant lifting gently as you do so not to break any tubers in the process. Let the fork do the work then pry up the tuber clump shaking off excess dirt.

Step W-

Keep the clumps dirty until it's time to **WASH**, but do so very soon after digging not waiting any longer than 72 hrs to keep them from getting squishy from dehydration. After spraying off with a high power wash we dip clumps in diluted bleach water.

Step D

We start **DIVIDING** the day of not waiting any longer than 24 hours. Making sure each tuber has an eye.



MISTY'S LDW-DDPS TUBER SAVING SYSTEM

Step D

This step is crucial. Dahlia tubers need to be nice and **DRY** to store. It takes about 24 hrs for cuts to heal over and dry.

Step P

Once dry it's time to **PACKAGE**. We plastic wrap each tuber entirely and then roll again placing the next tuber then rolling again. About 6 tubers per package depending on size make nice packs and easy to label.

Step S

Once the tuber packages are labeled they put in crated to be **STORED** at around 40 degrees. It's very important to keep them in a cool dark place in the winter keeping watch to make sure they don't get frozen. Or get too warm and start sprouting and or dehydrating.



Snips & Tips:

Check on your tubers every month throughout the winter and through out any that have fungus, mold or rot.

DAHLIA TASKS AT-A-GLANCE



START INSIDE

FOR EARLIER BLOOM



ONCE BLOOMING

DEADHEAD & HARVEST FLOWERS OFTEN



WATER DEEPLY

EVERY 3-4 DAYS



WAIT FOR FROST

TO DIG UP TUBERS

DAHLIA RESOURCES

Where to Buy Dahlia Tubers:

<http://www.dahliaaddict.com>

****Please note sometimes you have to
contact the dahlia grower to have them
ship your tubers in March...**

Dahlia Farms To Follow

Cozy Town Dahlias

Micro Flower Farm

Weed & Pest Control Products:

Amazon

Garden Supply Stores

Favorite Dahlia Books:

The Flower Workshop ~Areilla Chezar

The Plant Lover's Guide to Dahlias ~Andy Vernon

Dahlias, A Little Book of Flowers ~Tara Austen Weaver

BEFORE I GO



The varieties of dahlias we grow changes a bit from season to season as we track which ones are the most productive and have the longest vase life. Please know this dahlia growing guide will be updated from time to time. We are truly excited about our future here at All Dahlia'd Up Flower Farm as we dive into growing even more dahlias and let's not forget our on-farm events, retreats and dinner tours.

We love sharing our flower farm and are available to speak at your event, group or meeting.

THANK YOU



We hope you enjoyed this guide as much as we loved creating it. Don't be a stranger. Any questions please give me a call, follow our social places and sign up for our newsletter if you haven't already.

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