

Dahlias typically are easy to grow. Grown from tuberous roots, they produce beautiful blooms mid-summer through fall and are available in a wide variety of colors and shapes. Dahlias need very similar care as tomatoes. If tomatoes like your yard, it's a good bet that dahlias will too.

Tubers can go directly into the ground in the spring when the ground has warmed and there's little chance of frost. A good time frame for planting is around Mother's Day or after the last frost. They can be planted as late as mid-June. For earlier blossoms, tubers can be started indoors about one month before planting. Dahlias require good drainage and partial to full sun.

They should be planted several inches deep with the "eye" on the tuber facing up. The eye is the point on the crown the plant grows from. If planting a number of dahlias in the same location, they should be separated by about 2 feet to give plants room to grow.

Dahlias are strong, robust growers with lots of blooms, including very large blooms. The good news for dahlias is that they are low on the deer's list of favorite foods. While dahlias are not "deer proof," they're considered to be in some parts of the country – probably areas where deer find enough other plants they prefer to eat!

Young dahlias don't need a lot of water; excessive water can lead to plant rot. It's good to water larger plants if the rainfall is less than one inch in seven days. Pots require more regular watering. It's a good idea to tie the plant to stake as they grow. Tomato cages may be used instead of tying.

Dahlias form three buds. "Disbudding" or removing two of the three is recommended. It will offer less blooms but the flower will be larger and healthier. Dahlias will continue to bloom until frost.

In fall, tubers can be dug up and stored in a dry, cool place or they can be left in the ground if a 4"-5" layer of mulch is applied for insulation.

For more information, please visit the American Dahlia Society website at www.dahlia.org.