

# Digging & Storing Dahlias

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# Dahlia 101

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- Tuberous root
- Hardy to zone 7
- Native to Mexico and Central America
- 10 different groups
- Can plant from seed but not true to parent

# The Great Dig

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- Dig after foliage turns black from frost
  - This is flexible timing, some people dig before frost but tubers are often more tender.
  - Can let stay in ground a while after foliage dies.
- Cut back foliage to about 1'
  - I like to cut them one day and then dig the next day
  - Inspect foliage before cutting for signs of virus or verticillium wilt
- A pitchfork or broadfork works best
  - A shovel should also be handy for large clumps
- Label tubers



# To divide or not to divide

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| Pros of dividing                            | Cons of dividing              |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Tubers take up less space                   | End of the season tired       |
| Have a better idea of number of stock       | Open up wounds before storing |
| Can check on tubers easier                  | Have to wash                  |
| Can separate tubers for less potential rot? | Store better?                 |

# Storage prep

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- Wash, or don't...
  - Knock off large clumps if you decide not to wash.
- Divide, or don't...
  - If you decide to divide, leave tubers out in an area with good air circulation to callose for a couple days after dividing.
  - You can dip tubers in a 10% bleach solution after callusing to remove any potential disease from tuber surface.
  - If you wait until spring to divide, let tubers wake up a little to find eye easier.



# Storage

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- Everyone will store them differently depending on their location
- Ideal storage temps are 35°F - 45°F
  - Never let drop below freezing
  - Higher temps will pull tubers out of dormancy and promote rot
- Media and containers for storage depends on the humidity of the room.
- You can wrap tubers individually to make sure one doesn't rot the other.



# Storage

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|                | <b>Low humidity</b>                                 | <b>High humidity</b>                     |
|----------------|---|--|
| Media type     | Saran wrap, damp vermiculite, peat, sphagnum moss   | Cedar shavings, vermiculite, newspaper   |
| Container Type | Plastic tote, garbage bags, ziplock bags, Styrofoam | Plastic tote, cardboard box, paper bags, |



# Disease & Storage Problems

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- Look for disease when digging or receiving tubers
  - Crown gall, leafy gall
- Check tubers once a month minimum for signs of rot
  - Gray mold – botrytis
  - Rotting tubers – make sure to check bottom of tote
- Shriveled tubers?
  - Need more humidity
- Sprouts starting?
  - Too warm

# Wake Up!

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- If you didn't divide at digging, you can divide in late winter or shortly before planting to sell or pre-sprout.
  - Pre-sprout mid-March, early April depending on if you are taking cuttings
- Start to warm tubers at least 2 weeks before planting for best survival rates.



# Questions?

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