

# Dahlia

-

## Costas Lymbouris

# Dahlia Origins

- Dahlia originated in Mexico and brought to Europe in 1789
- Today there are over 50,000 named varieties
- Maximum flowering needs min. 6 hours sun
- Do not like to be waterlogged, good drainage

# Dahlia Are Easy to Grow

- Dahlia grow quickly
- Easy to propagate from division and Cuttings so you can multiply your best plants quickly
- Flower bearing plants from cuttings in 3-months
- Many have attractive foliage from June
- Long flowering period, summer & autumn flowers

# Mid September



Dahlias & Canna Lilies  
*Costas Lymbouris*

# Treat as Annuals

- tubers can be bought cheaply £2-£4
- can be grown for a season to provide flowers from July to November, then discard

# Treat as Hardy Perennials

- Can be treated as hardy perennials, leave in the ground to overwinter and emerge the following year
- Biggest threats to dahlia overwintering in the soil are; water logged soil and slugs
- If growing in pots;
  - move pots undercover and protect from freezing
  - or cover the pot with a lid or bag (sprinkle a few slug pellets), wrap in bubble wrap and move next to house walls

# Treat as Hardy Perennials

- Dig up in autumn of 3<sup>rd</sup> year and store for overwintering as per tender perennials or leave until early spring

Note: I have had problems **digging** and moving dahlia in spring so no longer do this.

# 6-year old clump



# Treat as Tender Perennials

- Can be treated as tender perennials, dig up and overwinter in a cool dry place
- Wait until a week or two after the foliage has frosted and blackened, cut back stems
  - Some growers have success storing plants after cuttings stems when foliage is still green and the plant in flower

# Storage - Curing

- Prior to storage, dahlia tubers should be washed, allowed to dry under cover for 2 to 4 weeks exposed to the air (mine in the shed)
- During this 'curing' process, cuts heal over, the skin thickens and the tubers will store better without shrivelling
- Will also allow you to cut away any parts like stems that start rotting before you store them

# 3-Year Old Clump



# Storing Dahlia Tubers (March)



Cut off all roots  
plant will make new ones  
theses will rot away

Dahlia 'Art Deco'

Dahlia 'Art Deco'

Cut off, then  
clump put in 5% bleach solution



# Dahlia Anatomy

- Dahlia flowers grow from a stem attached to a “tuber” which has a collar at its neck



**eyes**  
growth points  
for new stems

# Dahlia Anatomy

- New growth (stems) will only grow from an 'eye' in the collar that is located between the tuber and the stem



# Newly Bought Packs

- Cut off old roots
- Discard any tubers with badly broken necks
- Soak in tepid water before planting
  - some growers add dilute fertiliser

# Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers

- Can do this 4 to 6 weeks before last frost date (mid May ?) so start in April
- Tells you which tubers are viable
- Will give flowers a month earlier than planting bare tubers in the ground in mid May
- Provides cutting material (I start in March)

# Pre sprouting Dahlia Tubers



# Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers 6/3/22



Bottom right tuber 10/3/22



# Softwood cuttings

- What follows is true for most softwood cuttings

# Compost for "Soft" Cuttings

- Use a multipurpose compost for your cuttings (but not John Innes mixtures – too dense)
- Amended
  - 3 parts compost (sifted to **aerate**)
  - 1 part sharp sand
  - 1 part Perlite
- The above is 60% compost but 50 – 50 is often used

# Cuttings

- As soon as a cutting is taken, it starts to die because its been removed from its "life support" system
- The quicker its put into soil the better its chances of survival
- Cuttings have no roots so need a well drained environment or will rot, compost goes stale
- This is the only time the compost should be saturated so the stem has access to water

# "Soft" Cuttings

- I find cuttings taken in March, might need bottom heat to root
  - Can put them on a window shelf above a radiator
  - Cover pot with a plastic bag or dome, to reduce transpiration
  - Can move to a cold greenhouse once rooted
- Cuttings taken in April and May are raised in a cold greenhouse – no heat
  - Placed in a tub, misted several times a day for the first weeks and covered except for an hour morning and afternoon
- Root in about 3-weeks

# Pre-sprouting Dahlia Tubers 15/3/22



# Ready for Cuttings 15/3/22



# Cuttings Taken 15/3/22



- “Wet - drench” compost
- Cuttings taken, used hormone rooting and pressed into compost
- Sprayed with water
- Will not be watered again for 2-3 weeks till rooted

Covered with a plastic bag  
placed on a window shelf



# "Soft" Cuttings

- Cuttings taken from plants in the ground from late June onwards, I root in bottles as I showed you for autumn cuttings.
- Placed in the shade but open to the elements
- Left to fend for themselves
- They will already be "hardened off" when rooted and can be moved into pots

# Dividing Dahlia Tubers

- Plants with multiple stems, can pull the tubers apart using the stem
- If single stem need to cut the clump so each piece has both a tuber and a piece of collar with an eye

Take care not to remove eyes



# Planting "Bare" Tubers

- Dahlia tubers showing no signs of growth can be planted into the ground upto 1 month before the last frost date; *wait for a dry period*
- Stems will take 3-4 weeks to reach the surface depending on temperature
- Plant 4-6 inch deep, helps to support the stems when windy and allows them to be overwintered in the ground. Work fertiliser in
- *Do not plant in soaking wet soil and only water sparingly (not needed if wet) after planting as bare tubers not in growth will rot when wet*

# Planting “Sprouted” Dahlias

- Plant 4-6 inch deep, water in the plant sparingly, then only water when dry. Dahlia mainly need regular watering when in flower
- Plants first job is making leaves and roots
- Once the plant is 30-45cm tall, pinch back so that it has 3-4 pairs of leaves remaining. This encourages the plant to branch and send out a greater number of flowering stems
  - Not essential for short dahlias < 75cm

# Feeding

- There is no consensus on fertiliser to use for dahlia plants, much will depend on your soil
  - I suggest a nitrogen rich fertiliser when planting
  - Work slow release fertiliser granules into the soil above the plant to help leaf growth, then mulch
  - Use a balanced fertiliser such as NPK 10-10-10 and feed once a month in the summer to prolong flowering
- I use a half strength feed every 2-weeks (do not exceed monthly strength in instructions)

# Dahlias in Pots

- Dahlias grow well in pots
- They must have well drained compost, so work sand and/or Perlite into the growing medium
- Dahlias like a rich diet, so work a good quantity of slow release fertiliser into the growing medium
- Can supplement with a liquid feed once a month when they are flowering well
- If overwintering in pots, cover pot with a bag

# Questions

