

TUBER to BLOOM



Welcome Dahlia Lover!

This guide was created for cold weather growing but can be modified for any climate or zone.

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...

Est. 2014

All Dahlia'd Up

Flower  Farm

Palmer, Alaska

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.

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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 your tubers 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. Main thing to consider is making sure the soil has warmed up to around 60%.

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

Either way, be sure your tubers have eyes before you plant or start indoors.





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.

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

Same method applies if planting a tuber instead of a transplant like we do.

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

We use an elaborate criss cross for corralling 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.



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.

-Foliar 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 MANAGEMENT

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 or spinosad. Be sure to read labels.

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.

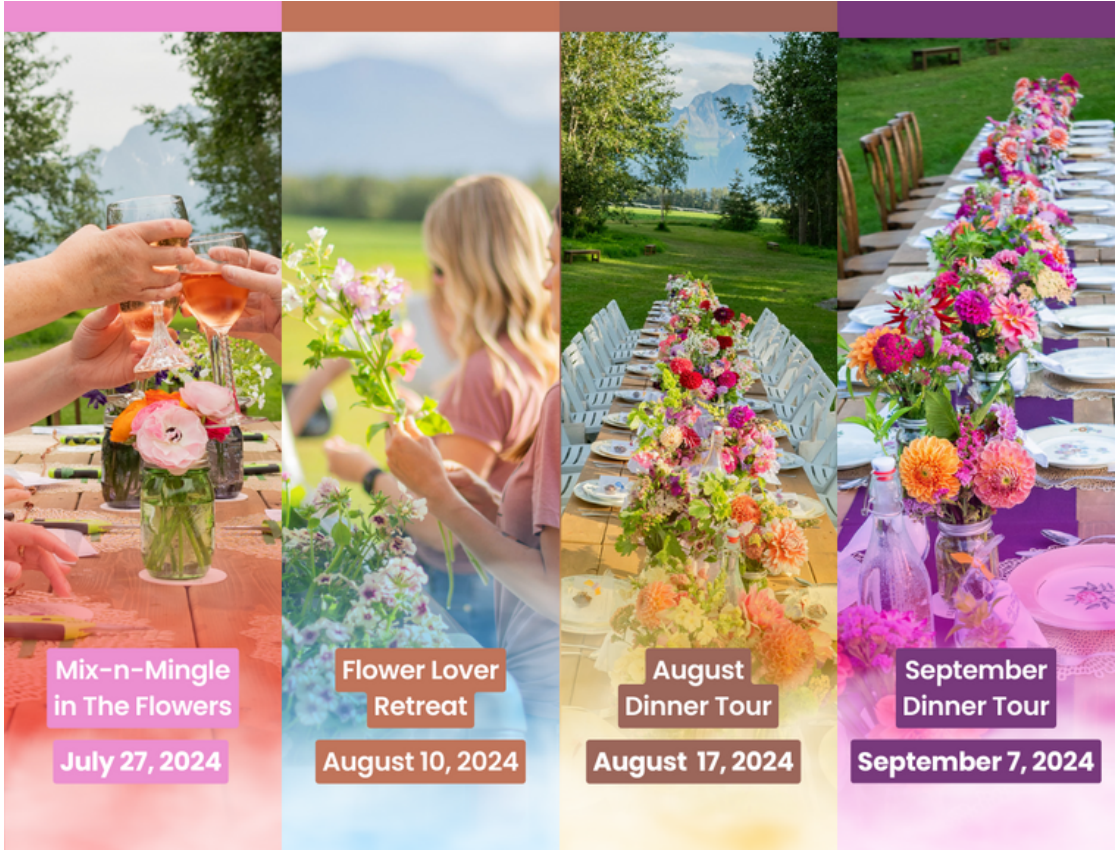
BEFORE I GO



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. 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.

GET TICKET(S)



Mix-n-Mingle
in The Flowers

July 27, 2024

Flower Lover
Retreat

August 10, 2024

August
Dinner Tour

August 17, 2024

September
Dinner Tour

September 7, 2024

Est. 2014

All Dahlia'd Up

Flower  Farm

Palmer, Alaska

2024 FLOWER FARM EVENTS

Pick Your Favorite

Get Your Ticket(s)

Location:

1963 South
Innerspringer Loop

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Misty Vanderweele

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WATER OR 7-UP OR EVEN A
DROP OF BLEACH

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Misty Vanderweele

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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