

Getting Ready To Plant Dahlias – by Marianna Boda

Our **Hands-On** quest for growing beautiful dahlias began late in the fall of 2011, as we saved our tubers for the 2012 planting season. We should all check the health of the Tubers, hopefully all of them survived and are plump and free of any kind of harmful enemies and are ready for the season. Some of us might buy some new ones.

Things needed to successfully grow these flowering beauties:

Careful placing is important. Dahlias like at least 8 hours of sun away from strong winds, also: think of their colour affects and pick the planting site accordingly. Soils temperatures of 15 C degrees; use thermometer if in doubt.

Things needed to plant:

Fertilizer 5-10-5, spade, wooden stake (for support) of about 4' high 1"x1" or bigger, or tomato cage, peony rings are good for smaller ones.

To plant: if clay soil, mix in 1/3 amount peat moss as you dig soil at about 1' x 1' x 1' deep. Mix in ¼ c. bone meal. Drive your wooden stake in at back end of the hole. Mix in a handful (1/2c.) of compost or general low nitrogen fertilizer, **DO NOT OVER DO** - cover with 4 inches of soil and place the tuber in the hole with "eye" away from the stake. Add about 3 inches of soil to cover tuber. **TAP GENTLY; MAKING SURE IT IS COVERED EVENLY.** Water only if soil is dry. Tuber should start showing its new sprouts in a few days according to weather conditions. As green parts are growing pinch out the weak shoots, leaving only one strong one (or two if you are greedy like me). Carefully fill in hole with soil as size of plant is progressing. Tie label to stake or make one and pin to ground. Keep area weed free. Remove damaged or broken stems. If using tomato cages, make sure they are in place.

This info was compiled by **Marianna Boda** in preparation for the garden club's 2012 Dahlia Competition season.