



## GARDENING MAINTAINANCE TIPS FOR PLANTING & GROWING DAHLIAS

Dahlias are stunning flowers that thrive with proper care, especially in Southern California's mild climate. Here are some care and maintenance tips to help your dahlias flourish.

- 1. Planting:** Plant dahlia tubers in well-draining soil in a spot that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily. The ideal planting time is spring when the soil has warmed up and there's no risk of frost.
- 2. Watering:** Dahlias require a consistent watering schedule. They like moist soil but not waterlogged. In Southern California, you might need to water your dahlias 2-3 times a week, more frequently if the weather is particularly hot and dry.
- 3. Fertilizing:** Feed your dahlias a low-nitrogen liquid fertilizer every 3 to 4 weeks from sprouting until the flowering starts. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers as they can promote lush foliage at the expense of blooms.
- 4. Mulching:** Apply a layer of organic mulch around the base of your dahlias to retain moisture, suppress weeds, and keep the soil cool. This is particularly helpful during hot Southern California summers.
- 5. Staking:** Dahlias, especially the taller varieties, will need staking to support their heavy blooms. Install stakes at planting time to avoid damaging the tubers later.
- 6. Pruning and Deadheading:** Pinch back the main stem when the plant reaches about 16 inches to promote bushier growth and more blooms. Regularly deadhead spent flowers to encourage continuous blooming throughout the season.
- 7. Pest and Disease Management:** Keep an eye out for snails, slugs, and aphids. Use environmentally friendly pest control methods like hand picking pests and using insecticidal soaps. Avoid overhead watering to reduce the risk of fungal diseases.
- 8. Winter Care:** Dahlia tubers are not frost-tolerant. In Southern California, you might be able to leave tubers in the ground over winter if the area is frost-free. Otherwise, dig up the tubers after the first frost, let them dry, and store them in a cool, dry place until spring.

By following these tips, your dahlias should thrive and bring vibrant color to your Southern California garden.