

Spring has Sprung

My dahlia bed preparation

By Ian Hamley

Winter is finally over, and spring is here, now is the time to start to plan and prepare our dahlia beds for the coming season.

Planning your bed; one thing I have learnt in the short time I have been growing dahlias is the importance to plan your dahlia bed well in advance of planting. You need to consider a range of things such as type and size of the dahlias you have chosen, the number of dahlias you intend to plant and the spacings between each tuber.

This year I am planting my dahlias 800mm apart to allow for better air flow to help reduce powdery mildew and to allow more sunlight in. I put my stakes in before I plant which allows me to have the correct spacings and work out the number of dahlias I can plant in my beds. Dahlias will need staking as they will fall over as they grow and produce blooms; it is best to put your stakes in before you plant.

Soil preparation is very important; dahlias like a well-drained soil so soil preparation is critical for good blooms. Now is a good time to add some organic fertilizer to your soil to build up nutrients in the soil before you plant. This year I have added cow manure to my dahlia beds which I have dug in, I will dig the beds over again before I plant in November.

If your soil is tightly packed and clumpy dig in some clean river sand to help with drainage. While dahlias need a lot of water when they are in bloom, they do not like being wet so good drainage is critical. If your soil is too wet the tubers may rot.



Stakes 800mm apart

While I do not have a large area to plant my Dahlias by planning and preparing my beds I am able to grow good quality dahlias for various shows and cut flowers.

Have a great spring and don't forget to plan and prepare.

Tuber Check

Now is the time to check on our tubers that have been stored over winter.

- Dust them off and check to see if eyes are forming.
- Discard any that are soft/rotted to avoid the spread of rot through the remaining tubers.
- Check the condition of the tuber neck discard any that are broken or rotted.
- Ensure you label them so you know what you are planting later on

Place them back in your storage containers and cover them over with your sawdust and put them away until planting time.

Tuber Sales

Our tuber sales have been going strong while our varieties have sold out there are still Mystery Packs available. Our Mystery packs are made up with tubers that have lost their label, it is a lucky dip, but you can be assured they will be good quality.

If you want more tubers for the garden this season now is the time to place your order for a Mystery Pack. Visit our tuber sales to download our current tuber list and place your Mystery Pack order. Tubers will be being to be shipped in October.

Note our tuber list will end very soon so get in while you can.

You will find our Tuber Sales List at:

<http://www.portlanddahliasocietyinc.com.au/>

Get Well Soon Alf

We are glad to see Alf home again after an extended stint in Geelong Hospital. We wish Alf a speedy recovery from his surgery and hope to see him up and about out in his dahlia garden in the near future.

Portland Dahlia & Rose Show

11th & 12th March 2023

Portland Civic Hall



WHAT THE JUDGES LOOK FOR

In Australia, blooms are assessed on six main criteria.

- condition,
- form,
- stem,
- colour,
- size and,
- staging.

Blooms should be fresh and mature – firm, not drooping, clean and free of blemishes such as damaged and missing florets. Centres of double cultivars should not be open or hard and green. Pollen on open-centred blooms should be fresh.

Blooms should conform to the form standard for the type. The face should be symmetrical and circular without gaps or uneven spacing of the florets.

Stems should be straight, not weak, and in proportion to the bloom.

Colour should be clear and bright, not faded, and consistent. A bi-colour bloom should have two clearly defined colours on the faces of the florets forming a regular pattern with even tipping. A blend of two or more colours should merge gradually and evenly.

The diameter of the bloom should conform to that required by the competition class. See the standard sizes below.

Blooms should be staged to face the viewer with at least 160mm between the centre of the bloom and the top of the container.

The Australian Standards define five distinct sizes:

Giant	260mm and over
Large	210mm and under 260mm
Medium	160mm and under 210mm
Small	120mm and under 160mm
Miniature	under 120mm

WHERE SHOULD I GROW DAHLIAS?

Dahlias need plenty of sunshine. Full sun is OK but hot weather can burn buds and bleach blooms, particularly large dark ones. A structure with shade cloth (50% white or cream is best) will protect the plants from the sun. The shade cloth should be over two metres high to give space for grower and plants. A vertical barrier of shade cloth on the side of the prevailing winds reduces wind damage on exposed sites.

HOW DO I GET MORE, BETTER BLOOMS?

Apart from feeding and watering to keep the plants healthy there are ways of grooming the plant to control the quality and quantity of the flowers it produces.

Where several shoots are coming through the soil, select the strongest one and carefully remove the rest by cutting as close to the tuber as possible.

The first pair of leaves above the ground are the cotyledon leaves that are effectively part of the seed, not true leaves, and can be removed to improve air circulation after a few true leaves have appeared. True leaves develop throughout the plant in pairs, opposite each other, out of the main stem or a lateral/branch. Orientation of the leaf pairs alternate – if a pair is oriented east-west the next pair up will be oriented north-south.

STOPPING

When the plants have reached 4-5 sets of leaves pinch out the growing tip. This encourages a bushier plant with more flowers. Choosing to stop above a pair with the right orientation can ease access for the grower and reduce crowding of adjacent plants.

DISBRANCHING

Branches will form on either side of the plant at the nodes of the remaining leaves. You can disbranch by removing laterals (but not the leaves) from each set of nodes to get bigger blooms on the remaining branches, to control the size and shape of the plant and to open the plant up for better air circulation. Disbranch less if you want more flowers.

As a precaution against powdery mildew strip a few lower leaves from the plants to provide more air circulation.

DISBUDDING

Flower buds develop in threes or fives, three on the ends of each branch and sometimes two more side buds at the next lower leaf pair.

For show quality blooms it is necessary to disbud. Pinch out the side buds to enable the one central bud to expand into a champion bloom!

PICK, PICK, PICK

From February most dahlias will be producing prolifically. Harvest blooms and deadhead constantly to ensure that blooms maintain size and colour. Give away the excess flowers to friends, hospitals, churches etc.

Picking is best done in the morning when the plants are crisp with moisture. Immerse the stems in water immediately on cutting.

If you use scissors or even your thumbnail to dig out the lateral, be sure to sterilize your tool between plants - using a weak bleach solution for example - to avoid transferring virus from plant to plant.

JOBS FOR THE MONTH

August – September

Check stored tubers.

Work on preparing the soil.

Move tubers into a warm place to stimulate shoots from which to take cuttings.

Tidy up around garden beds, remove weeds and clean out hiding places for snails and other pests.

Check your stakes and saw off any rot. Buy replacements if they are too short to use.



Upcoming Events

Meeting Schedule for 2022/2023:

Sunday 25th September 2022 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Sunday 9th October 2022 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Sunday 13th November 2022 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Sunday 11th December 2022 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Sunday 8th January 2023 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Sunday 12th February 2023 1:30 pm Portland Football Club

Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th March 2023 Portland Annual Dahlia & Rose Show

Sunday 19th April 2023 1:30 pm Alf's place (BBQ/Show Review)

Sunday 7th May 2023 1:30 pm Portland Football Club (AGM)

Membership Fees

A friendly reminder if have not yet paid your annual membership fee you can do so via bank transfer.

Account Name: Portland Dahlia Society

BSB: 063536

Account No. 10062405

Useful Links

Dahlia Society of Australia
<http://www.dahliaaustralia.org.au/>

Dahlia Society of Victoria
<https://dahliasocietyofvictoria.org.au/>

Portland Dahlia Society
<http://www.portlanddahliasocietyvnc.com.au/>

Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT
<http://dahliasocietyvnswnswact.org.au/>

International Dahlia Societies

American Dahlia Society
<http://www.dahlia.org/>

Colorado Dahlia Society
<http://www.dahlias.net/>

National Dahlia Society of UK
<http://www.dahlia-nds.co.uk/>

National Dahlia Society of New Zealand
<http://www.nzdahliasociety.50megs.com/index.html>

Dahlia Society of France
<http://dahlia.france.free.fr/>

The Growing World of Dahlias
<http://www.dahliaworld.co.uk/>

For Sale

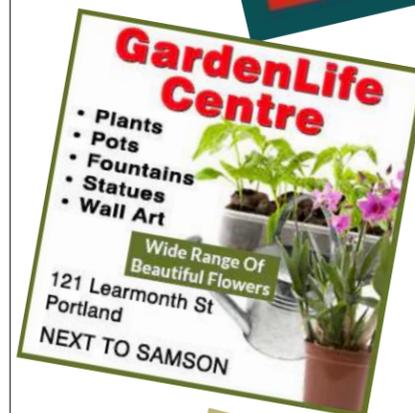
Honda Tiller \$600

Tiller no longer required hardly used. Please contact President B. Millard or Secretary I. Hamley for further details.



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Please contact Secretary Ian Hamley if there is an article you would like to see in the newsletters, Newsletter will be compiled on a monthly basis from September to May to help us keep in touch and update members on activities and events.