

Planning Your Dahlia Garden

Southtown Dahlia Club suggestions – more info at www.SouthtownDahliaClub.com



Determine:

- What are your Goals
- What are your space/light/time/experience limitations
- How can you find available resources to improve your chances of success

Potential Goals for incorporating dahlias in your garden

- Add immediate color and structure to existing landscape for a relatively low cost
- Grow varieties that produce prolific blooms suitable for displays in your home and to share with friends
- Produce show quality blooms that will win awards at dahlia shows
- Expand and share your gardening skills / learn new techniques / enjoy the dahlia community

Goal: Color and Structure at Low Cost



The tall, upright stalks of dahlias can add a sense of structure, be used as a screen, and act as an anchor to your garden.

The picture featured here is from the **Dahlia Bed at the High Dive Pavilion in Elkhart Indiana**, maintained by the dedicated members of the Elkhart Dahlia Society. Dahlias are strategically placed at the back of the bed for height and anchoring.

Positioned at the back of a perennial bed, as a screen to change a view, or to add bursts of color within an evergreen bed, it only takes a few dahlias to make an impact in your landscape.

Dahlias are usually planted around Memorial Day and each will quickly fill a space of 2 ft by 2 ft with lush green foliage. Available at our spring sale, a selection of six dahlias can be bought for \$24 and will fill a space 2ft by 12 ft within 30 days. They will begin blooming within 60 days, and will provide color in the garden until the first frost, generally around November 1st in our area. People always ask us “do I have to dig them up?” For little more than the cost of a flat of annuals, our answer has changed to “NO.” If you want to learn to store dahlias we can help you in that endeavor, but realistically, if you only grow 6-10 dahlias per year, it is as cost efficient to simply start over next year.

Goal: Prolific amounts of cut flowers to enhance your home and complement your personal style



Many varieties of dahlias have been hybridized to produce abundant blooms that have a lasting quality.

When consulting a dahlia catalogue, choose varieties listed as “good for cut flowers.” These often include the “ball” and “pompon” varieties because of their compact and tightly formed blooms in the 4-6” range. Our spring sale will include examples of these prolific bloomers, such as Rose Toscano, Jessie G, and Peaches N Cream.

Larger varieties that reliably produce abundant blooms of 8-10” include Elsie Huston and Kelvin Floodlight and will also be readily available at the Southtown Dahlia Club 5/18/14 sale.

In general, sizes “B” and “BB” will produce more blooms, and earlier blooms than those labeled as “Dinnerplate” varieties, or in dahlia speak, “AA’s” and “A’s.” The smaller blooms take less time to form, and the plants are grown with more branches thereby producing more blooms. Consider growing a mix of sizes in a variety of petal formations in the same color palette as your home décor for flower arrangements that enhance your living environment.

Space /Light/Time/Experience Requirements

We compare dahlia plants to growing Beefsteak tomatoes in terms of ground space, light, water, and support. Each dahlia plant will fill at least a 24” square space. Each will need a firmly placed stake of 5’ or more, allowing for 1’ below the ground. Plants will thrive with 6-8 hrs of light per day, and 1-2” of water per week. Periodic applications of foliar fertilizer, applied to plants grown in soil amended with fertile compost will produce abundant blooms. You can learn more about the particulars of dahlia cultivation by coming to monthly meetings, and interacting with our long time dahlia growers.

Choose Dahlias that suit your Personal Style

The American Dahlia Society produces quarterly publications that give great insight into the world of dahlias. You can join the “ADS” at a reduced price through the Southtown Dahlia Club and receive these quarterly publications for free. The most recent ADS bulletin lists the “Top 50”, “Cream of the Crop” and special award winners from the 2013 Show season. The “ADS Classification Booklet,” free with ADS membership, and \$4 at our sale, lists all certified dahlias, their colors, petal forms, hybridizers, year of introduction and awards they have received. Like a handicap bulletin at the horse races, this publication will help you to choose the most reliable, spectacular and amazing dahlias out of the thousands offered.

Planning your Dahlia Garden P3

Goal: Grow Show Quality Blooms



Cultivating Show Quality blooms requires

- Good Stock
- Pinching and pruning at regular intervals
- Knowledge of timing your blooms to be ready on the show dates
- Sacrifice of more blooms for several larger spectacular blooms
- Constant quest for knowledge, experimentation, dedication to a singular interest

Goal: Expand /share gardening skills / learn about dahlias, join the dahlia community

You may be a new or experienced gardener who will enjoy spending time with like-minded individuals. You may know a lot or a little about dahlias, but know you will enjoy watching them bloom. You may be at a time in your life when it's nice to meet new people, learn new things, or teach others about the things that you know. Membership in a club like the Southtown Dahlia Club affords us all the chance to get together once a month to share some time together talking about things we all enjoy. Your garden plans will come alive when shared with others in the club. Below is a picture from one of our summer picnics – you can see the dahlias in the background.



Dahlia Sources

Buy good stock –Southtown Dahlia Club Sale 5/18/14 – cuttings, tubers, mature dahlia plants

For more information, visit our website at www.SouthtownDahliaClub.com and check out our links for online dahlia sources and resources. Please join us at an event listed on our calendar.