Dahlias - lifting and storing the tubers

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DAHLIAS

Lifting and Storing the Tubers

By P. JACKSON

NOW that the flowering season for dahlias has finished, arrangements must be made for lifting and storing the tubers. Many losses occur each year during the dormant period and most of these are due either to carelessness or lack of knowledge. While the storage provided for dahlias during the winter months may be thoroughly satisfactory, tubers are often lost because of the treatment received by the plants during the growing period.

To use large quantities of poultry manure or other manures rich in nitrogen without regular light dressings of sulphate of potash is to court disaster. An ample supply of potash is essential for the thorough ripening of dahlia tubers and without it, the tubers are usually in a soft and watery condition when lifted and rarely keep for very long.

Another factor of importance is the time of lifting. Tubers that are lifted before they are sufficiently dormant often rot away before the next planting season arrives.

HINTS ON LIFTING

A method recommended for lifting and storing is as follows:—If possible wait until all life has gone from the foliage before making a start. In sandy soil it may be necessary to "wrench" the plant to stop growth. This is done by using a fork all round the plant. At a distance of about 10 in. from the stalk push the fork in to its full depth and then move the handle away from the plant. This action loosens the roots and about a week later lifting can be commenced.

Before lifting, all dahlia plants should be cut down to within 10 in. of the ground. This will give a stalk about a foot long after the tuber is lifted. The reason for this long stalk is to prevent water, snails and slugs from getting down the stalk into the crown of the clump. The stalk is much like a bamboo, being partitioned every few inches, and while the partitions may be thin they last long enough to be effective.

Tubers can be lifted now and a good fork is better for this work than a spade. Do not shake all the soil away from the crown of the clump after lifting. There are two good reasons why some of this soil should be left on the tubers. Firstly, soil packed tightly around the crown...
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gives some stability and consequently fewer tubers get broken necks. Second-
ly, the soil acts as some protection when 
the young shoots emerge next season.

Do not think that this recommenda-
tion means that you must use some 
covering during the storage period and 
resort to the use of grass or bags. Such 
coverings only provide hiding-places for 
pests and it would be far better to leave 
the crowns entirely uncovered.

STORAGE SITES

Storage is easily arranged. Suitable 
places would be under a hedge, under 
an evergreen tree such as an orange or 
on the lee side of closed picket fences. 
Tubers should be laid on the ground and 
it is advisable to place them where they 
can be seen without trouble. A constant 
watch should be kept for insects and any 
that appear should be destroyed. 
Neither sun nor rain will damage the 
tubers but protection from frosts is es-
sential. Draughty storage places should 
also be avoided.

The most common method of marking 
the varieties is to write the name on the 
underside of a couple of tubers in each 
clump, using an indelible pencil.
The following points are worthy of 
emphasis:

Do not neglect to use sulphate of 
potash during the growing period.

Do not lift the tubers too early; wait 
until foliage is yellow.

Do not store in a box in a garage or 
shed or in a draughty place.

Keep the tubers on the ground so that 
the roots can function when ready to 
start growth.

Many hundreds of varieties of the 
several different types of dahlias are 
grown in this State and perhaps men-
tion of a few of each type will be of some 
assistance to growers desirous of making 
a selection for next season.

GIANT DECORATIVES

Pop Harris.—Rich dark red.
Nobbys Light.—Medium yellow.
Miss Doris Brand.—Mahogany red and 
yellow.

Sunrise.—Rich golden yellow, shading 
to chrome at centre.

Croydon Snotop.—Pure white.
Croydon Masterpiece.—Dutch vermil-

Kelvin.—Salmon pink flushed bright 
pink.

Lavette.—Lavender.
Croydon Radiance.—Bluish carmine.
Croydon Cyclamen.—Cyclamen pink, 
tipped salmon.

Pamela Mary Joyce.—Yellow.

Nymphaea.—Lilac with cream shading.

A photograph does not do justice to the rich 
hue of the Decorative, Pop Harris.

GIANT HYBRID CACTUS

Beverley Robinson.—Deep lilac.
Mrs. C. H. Johns.—Rich yellow and 
chrome.

Conqueror.—Rich sulphur yellow.
Fernies Triumph.—Vivid scarlet.
Mountbatten.—Buttercup to old gold.
Shelbourne Sunset.—Red shades and 
gold.

Consul-General Quist.—Delicate shell 
pink.

Frau O'Bracht.—Creamy yellow.
Heart of Gold.—Orange, tipped gold.
Kelvin Pink.—Lilac pink.
Joan Black.—Light bronze shading to apricot centre.
Goulbourn.—Bronzy buff.

MEDIUMS (under 8 in.)
Eileen.—Pure pink.
Jersey Beauty.—Peach pink, very dark stems.
Brooklyn Coralie.—Coral pink to salmon rose.
Fernies Flame.—Bright red.
Olives Choice.—Rich pink, tipped gold.
Bunny.—Canary yellow.
Dulcie May.—Ox blood red.
Wm. E. Buckley.—Pink to creamy pink.

Golden Leader.—Golden yellow.
Water Lily.—Delicate pink, flushed cream.
Fernies Opal.—Cream overlaid opal pink.
Paul Pfitzer.—Salmon rose with salmon base.

CHARMS (not over 4 in.)
Tilburys Starlight.—Deep orange to old gold.
Barbara Lowery.—Creamy yellow overlaid carmine.

Delaware Royal.—Mauve pink.
Willie den Ouden.—Bright red with golden base.
Belle.—Bright yellow.
Chasamy.—Lolly pink with cream to primrose centre.
Kensington Fire.—Orange.
Palema Shaw.—Peach pink flushed buff.
Abbotts Snowflake.—White.
Cuddles.—Rich salmon with apricot shadings.
Black Jewel.—Blackish red.
Lorraine.—Gold, shaded orange.

POMPONS
Burwood.—Yellow, tipped scarlet lake.
Doria.—Dark portwine.
Brittains Delight.—Buff and primrose, tipped mauve.
Mrs. V. Brittain.—Mauve pink.
Margaret Williams.—Deep pink.
Little Willo.—White.
Rhonda.—Lilac.
Vashde.—White, tipped mauve.
Golf Ball.—Gold, tipped red.
Joyce Gibb.—Cream, tipped lilac pink.
Rosea.—Violet.
Edna Rumble.—Purple lake with silver base.

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