

May Dahlia Growing Guide: Time to Plant

May is the time to plant out!

All your work over the past months is coming to fruition as the average last frost date for our region is generally in May and after that it is safe to plant out your young plants (including seedlings, rooted cuttings and sprouts) or tubers into your garden beds. Dahlias are tender plants and do not tolerate frost. If you are interested in frost dates, such as the average earliest, median, or last, the [Illinois State Climatologist](#) has great information on its site. A lot of club members wait until later in May and use Memorial Day weekend to plant out their young plants or tubers since the soil will have warmed up by then.

Prior to planting out, if you have young plants, you should harden them off by slowly exposing them a few hours a day to the outside weather. It is helpful to start hardening off in a more shaded, protected area and increase the plant's exposure to sun.

Once your plants are hardened off, you should choose an area to plant that receives full sun. Full sun means that the area will receive direct sunlight for at least 6 hours during the day. When you are ready, dig a hole large enough to place the young plant or the tuber in the hole. Some members add an extended-release fertilizer such as Osmocote to the top of the soil and carefully rake it into the soil around the planted cutting or tuber. Many growers choose to place the stake in the hole at the time of planting so they don't damage the tuber later. You generally do not need to water if you are planting a tuber. Simply place the tuber horizontally in the hole and wait until you see green sprouts before you water.

Submitted by Justine Dial and Laura Matz. Adapted from the Puget Sound Dahlia Association.