



# DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

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[WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.COM](http://WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.COM)

**WILDWOOD MARIE WL-DP**  
**2011 FLOWER OF THE YEAR**

## MAY—DAHLIA PLANTING BEGINS

May is usually the first month to plant dahlia tubers or plants in the Atlanta and northern Georgia areas. Usually I recommend mid May as the start point because of the threat of late frost or at least cool soil temperatures. This spring has been quite pleasant. The soil in my garden reached the desired 70 degrees. The winter rains have been slightly below average so our garden soil can be worked with little concern of compacting. At the same time the cool temperatures at night

have been great for hardening off any plants or potted tubers. If you've done your homework then you know that your bed should have already been prepared in a sunny location that will get **AT LEAST ½ DAY OF SUN**. It will not be in the lowest spot of the garden but instead, it should be where good drainage exists or where you've already considered that and have provided for good drainage in some manner. **DAHLIAS DO NOT LIKE WET FEET!**

Once summer sets in, dahlias will grow extremely quickly and many can reach a height of between 3' and 7'. You will need to provide some support system in order to keep the growth off of the ground. You can use anything as simple as a wooden or metal (rebar) stake or even a more elaborate device such as a tomato cage. **SET YOUR STAKING SYSTEM BEFORE YOU PLANT THE DAHLIAS!** Stakes have been known to find and de-

story planted dahlias. I speak from personal experience. If you have **already IMPROVED THE SOIL IN YOUR PLANTING AREA WITH ANY NUMBER OF ENRICHING ORGANIC MATTER** then plant the dahlias in a hole about 3"- 4" deep. If you are planting tubers directly in the hole you do not need to add fertilizer at this time because the tuber supplies any needed food and most moisture. Gently refill the soil over the tuber while avoiding disturbing any young eyes or sprouts that have appeared on the tuber.

CONT ON P-2



**MAY MEETING  
TUBER  
SALE/AUCTION  
MAY 16, 7:30 PM  
OUR SECOND  
SPRING TUBER SALE  
WILL BE HELD IN  
THE GARDEN  
CLASSROOM IN THE  
BASEMENT OF THE  
MAIN BUILDING OF  
THE ATLANTA BO-  
TANICAL GARDEN.  
COME AND PUR-  
CHASE SOME HEAT  
TOLERANT DAHLIAS  
FOR YOUR GARDEN.**

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**  
**THE WITTOSCH FAMILY**  
**ROBERT, DENISE, GABRIEL**  
**DULUTH, GEORGIA**  
**WE ARE SO GLAD TO HAVE**  
**YOU AS MEMBERS OF THE**  
**DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA**

**DUES FOR 2011**

**We have a number of members that have not paid their 2011 dues and urge each of you to get your payment to Henry Everett, our Treasurer so their will be no interruption in receiving your publications. The dues are \$27 for an individual and \$30 for a family unit.**

**TUBER SALE**

**MEMBERS PLEASE BRING  
YOUR TUBERS FOR THE SALE/  
AUCTION**

**Tubers must meet the following:**

1. Listed in the 2010/2011 ADS Classification Book
2. Each tuber must have a visible eye or growing tip, or if the growing tip has been knocked off, please mark the location of the eye circled with a MM/pen.
3. The name of the tuber must be written on the tuber with a MM or a label attached to the tuber. Please be as accurate as possible with the name.
4. Bring only those considered as heat tolerant dahlias as listed on our website, new releases, or those that grow well in your garden.
5. Do not bring any tubers that you would not grow again in your own garden because of poor performance.

I recommend only partially fill the hole initially, adding soil gradually as the plant begins to grow. If any eye or sprout has been knocked off, they will regenerate themselves quickly and continue to grow. In fact I will eliminate all but one or two eyes before planting tubers so the remaining eye(s) will get full advantage of food and water. You do not need to water planted tubers at this time. The same method goes for any tubers you may have previously potted in order to begin the "awakening process". Gently tap the root /tuber mass out of the pot and place in the bottom of the hole. It is fine if any sprouts protrude above the top of the hole because that will provide you with an indication of the dahlia's health. You should water in this root/tuber mass to help it get off to a quick start. A handful of slow release fertilizer at planting time, left on the surface, is a good step at this time. I often plant the started tubers and root ball deeper than a tuber with only an eye showing. Dahlias have a lot of similar characteristics as tomato plants. You may want to plant a started tuber with a 10" shot at a depth of 6" – 8", leaving only the top pair of leaves and growth tip; tomatoes like to be planted deeply, too. By doing this you will help the plant establish an early, strong system of roots. Why? Because where each leaf meets the stalk, dahlias have to ability to produce roots or laterals. CONT P-3



**THE REAL DR. JOHN KAISER B-ID-OR**

When placed under the ground it will produce more roots. Those junctions of leaves above the ground will make branches (laterals). Roots help feed and collect water for the overall plant and the more roots, the healthier and more productive will be your dahlias. If you have created or acquired any dahlia plants then a small handful or less of fertilizer can be worked into the soil used to cover the base of the dahlia plant in the planting hole. Use a general, balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 or 12-12-12. As a precaution against burning by the midday sun of the new leaves, provide some type of cover over these plants for about 48 hours. You can use something as simple as a piece of wood or a cardboard box. Lean them or other items against the stake. This protection will allow the young plants to adjust to their new settings with the minimum of damage. Here again the plant will provide you with a visual indicator of its overall health.

At this time let me make two suggestions. Hold back several tubers or plants to replace any that fail to make it. At this month's auction buy several extra dahlias because as with any other flower, dahlias are subject to rot or other damage at various times throughout the growing season. Planting time is an "at risk" time until the dahlias acclimate to their new surroundings. Last spring we experienced a strong storm with high winds. The next morning I found that a tree had fallen on the dahlia garden and destroyed "several" dahlia plants. It was good that I had some substitutes.

Second, as an experiment, I challenge you to leave a plant or two or a started dahlia tuber or two in the pot. Any size pot will do. Plant the entire pot in the ground, covering to slightly over the top of the pot. Keep track of which ones are still in the pot. Experience has shown that there will be no discernable difference in the growth nor bloom production of these plants and, in the case your garden is visited by

tuber eating voles ( photo below) or chipmunks, the pot will stop these eating machines from feasting on your dahlia tubers.



For the past several years we have grown all of our dahlias by leaving them in the pots and planting the pot directly in the ground. Our garden contained over 1000 dahlia plants. I believe we have had the very same number and quality of blooms and there are at least

three advantages over dahlias planted directly into the garden soil. First, you will avoid any damage from burrowing moles, voles, and chipmunks. They can not chew through the pots. Second, if the particular variety of dahlia is a poor tuber maker, you will find that they do make tubers if planted while still in the pot. Third, in the fall when the plants die back, those left in pots are easily pulled from the ground and are very easy to store. That way you can avoid all of the digging and mess associated with washing and storing clumps of tubers. If you chose not to dig and store, simply cover with 4" to 6" of mulch and the dahlias will survive winter and grow again next season.

One last warning- until your plant's stalk has grown to the width of a good sized pencil; you should inspect your newly immerging sprouts and plants daily, if possible. At this stage new tender growth is very inviting to cutworms (photo below). They come out at night and you might find that new growth has been cut off at the surface. Your plant will look like it has been visited by a "tiny lumberjack". If you find that a

plant has been damaged or worse, search an inch or so down in the soil immediately around the damaged growth and you will probably find a fat, brown and-



round cutworm. Cutworms are hard to spot so take your time. Two stout rocks, used as cymbals, will take care of your lowly nemesis; ditto for an old pair of pliers. Some growers have been known to wrap aluminum foil around the lower couple of inches of new growth as a preventative cover. It works for dahlias and tomatoes; yet another similarity. Now, all the waiting is over. Begin planting your dahlias, get your hands dirty and your back sore. Rejoice that your passion is gardening.

Brian Killingsworth

## DISPLAY GARDEN PLANTING

We will plant the display garden in Stone Mountain Park Plantation this Saturday, May 14, starting at 9:00 AM. Please gather in the Plantation parking lot near the dumpster so we can walk up to the garden. If you are late just step over the fence and walk to the ante-bellum home. All tools will be provided. In case of bad weather we will defer until the following Saturday



**VALLEY PORCUPINE NX-LB PK/WH**



**NENEKAZI B-LC-LB DP/YL**



**KENORA SUNSET B-SC-FL GROWING IN GEORGIA**



**CAMPOS GIGI M-FD-LB BZ/YL**