

Dahlia Record Keeping

A sample spreadsheet to track your dahlias is attached (xlsx and pdf format)

Take pictures of blooms and plants, note growth characteristics to help you plan your garden for next year.

Depending on the number of plants and time available, start by recording those varieties that are new or that you want to keep and plant again.

Dahlia information that is useful to record:

- For new tubers, confirm you received and grew the **expected variety**.
Match plants to their name tags. Compare your variety to pictures from the supplier's website or do a Google search.
If a variety is registered with the American Dahlia Society (ADS), the classification number should also match the blooms.
For example, a variety classified as 3304 should have small red cactus flowers.
Online ADS classification: <https://www.dahlia.org/docsinfo/ocg/>
Helpful one page classification guide: https://dahlia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/4digit_conversion.pdf
- **Plant height:** in feet, approximately.
Plant height can depend on growing conditions but it's helpful to know approximate heights for each variety when planning your garden for next year. (Tip: measure the height of your knees, hips, shoulders, head and use those measurements as a rough guide while standing next to the plant.)
- **Plant growth:** vigorous growth, normal, poor. (or use +/-, +, ++, +++)
- Health of the **foliage:** healthy, or note down signs of disease such as mildew, virus, insects, etc.
For example, varieties prone to mildew might do better if given more space for extra air circulation in the next season.
Varieties showing serious signs of virus infections should be discarded or quarantined and planted in a separate area.
(Keep in mind that 90% of dahlia stocks in the USA were recently shown to be infected with one or more viruses.)
- Average **bloom size** in inches: when growing for show, a variety should have flowers of the expected size.
For example a *B* or medium-sized variety should have flowers that are over 6".
- **Bloom form and color:** important when growing flowers for show. Are the blooms well formed, symmetrical?
Fully double varieties should not show pollen too early or have hard green centers. Is the color as expected, without blotches or fading?
- **Number of blooms**, or floriferousness: how many blooms are on the plant?
Cut flower varieties should ideally produce many blooms over a long time.

- **Timing** of blooms: did the variety start to bloom early, mid or late in the season? Some varieties take a long time to start blooming and it might be worthwhile to plant them early, to start the tuber indoors or replace the variety with something else for the next season.
- **Comments:** add other characteristics such as dark red foliage, extra staking needs, if stems are weak/strong, or short/long.
Note down vase life if available.

While going through your garden, decide which varieties and plants you definitely want to overwinter and grow again next year. And if you have more than one plant for a specific variety, select the stronger plant or the one with the best blooms to overwinter. Then attach a label or flagging tape at the base of the stem, including the name of the variety or a general description (color/form) and add a note such as “Keep” or “Donate”. After digging up the clumps, these labels help you identify the tubers you want to keep for next year.

Also, write down any changes you might want to make to your overall planting scheme in the next season.

Discard failed plants (sick, or wrong type) and cut them down.

Please consider tagging your healthy, spare clumps to donate to MIDS for our tuber sale next year.