



NEDS

New England Dahlia Society

March 2024

Waking up Dahlia Tubers

www.newenglanddahliasociety.org
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Dahlia Growing – What to do in February/March

- Checking on stored tubers; dividing tubers
- Wake up dahlia tubers for cuttings;
- Starting dahlia from seeds
- Plan and prep garden: clean up, order/check supplies, compost, make plan
- Buy more tubers, swab tubers or wait for NEDS April tuber sale....

Dahlia Overwintering – What to do in February/March

☐ Check on stored tubers; divide tubers

- **warmer days & cold nights can cause excess condensation in storage containers
→ increase ventilation; move containers if needed**
- **shriveled tubers → repack more tightly**
- **remove rotting tubers; recut tubers & let dry; start pieces in pots**
- **avoid sprouting caused by warm storage temperature - unless waking them up**
- **divide clumps - if not done yet**

Wake up dahlia tubers - for cuttings only

February is generally too early to plant tubers indoors in pots
-> wait to pot up tubers until March/April - unless you have a heated greenhouse available

Timing for dahlia cuttings (approximate – differs by variety)

Waking up tubers:	2 to 5 weeks (some varieties need longer)
Root cuttings:	3 to 6 weeks (visible roots)
Grow on cuttings to planting size:	3 - 4 weeks



Waking up Dahlia Tubers

Supplies

1. Use a **professional soilless growing mix**: well-draining, light-weight, fresh, sterile, may contain bark, peat, coir, perlite, vermiculite

Examples: Sunshine Mix from Sun Gro Horticulture from Agawam,MA <https://www.sungro.com>

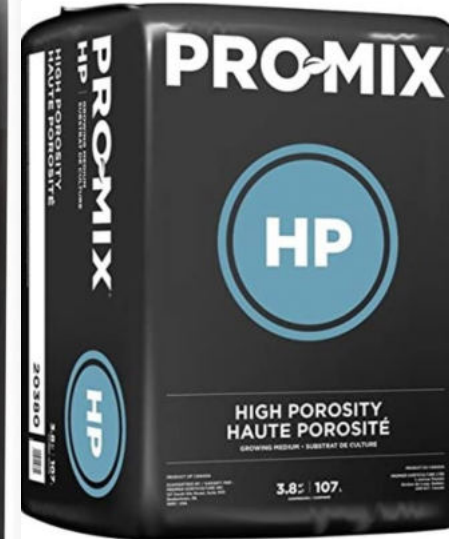
Fafard, Pro-Mix, Johnny's Seed company, or seed starting mixes
Buy from: Agway, local garden centers, or online

2. Pots or planting trays
3. Plant Labels
4. Heat mat with thermostat or a warm place ~60°-70°F

<https://www.thespruce.com/what-is-a-soilless-potting-mix-1403085>



Picture: SEMDS

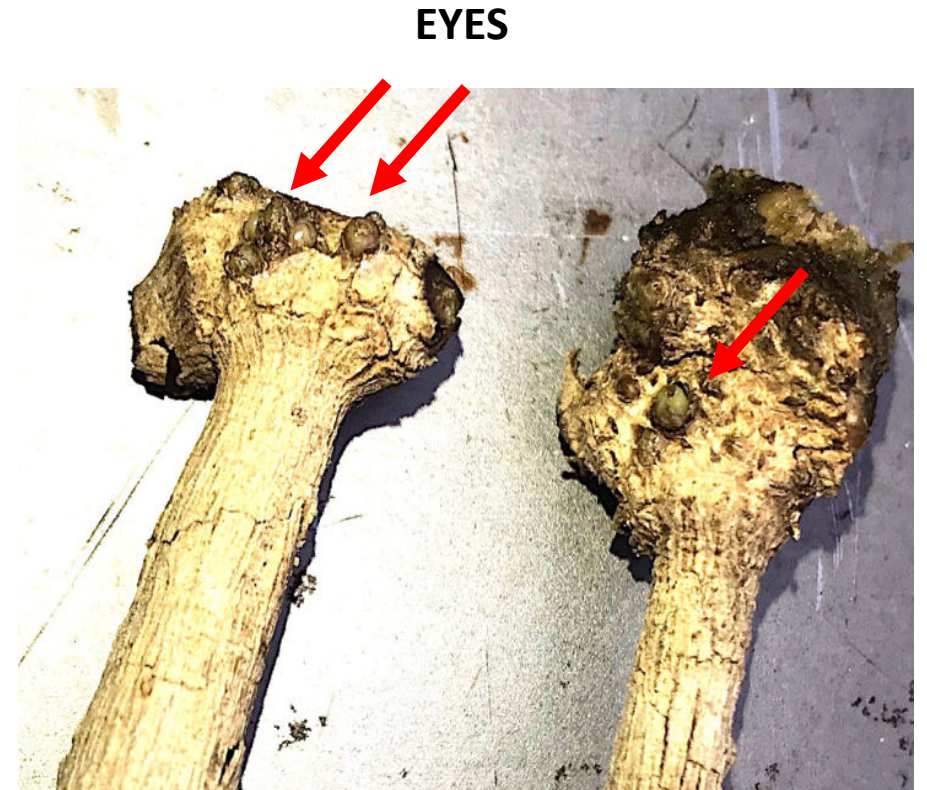


Wake up Dahlia Tubers

- Moisten the soilless mix; not too wet, moisten soil until it holds together when squeezed
- if water drips from soil mix, it's too wet
- Place tubers on top of a tray or plant into pot with eyes up/necks
- Crown should be above soil level to watch as eyes develop
- Add a label to each tuber
- Place tubers in warm location at 60°-70°F to allow tubers to sprout and grow roots (no light needed at this stage)
- Don't let tubers dry out -> add a vented cover, if necessary, possibly mist lightly
- Visible sprouts -> move to bright window or add grow lights (provide 12-24 hrs of light)
- Fertilizer – use only weak very diluted

Waking-up Dahlia Tubers

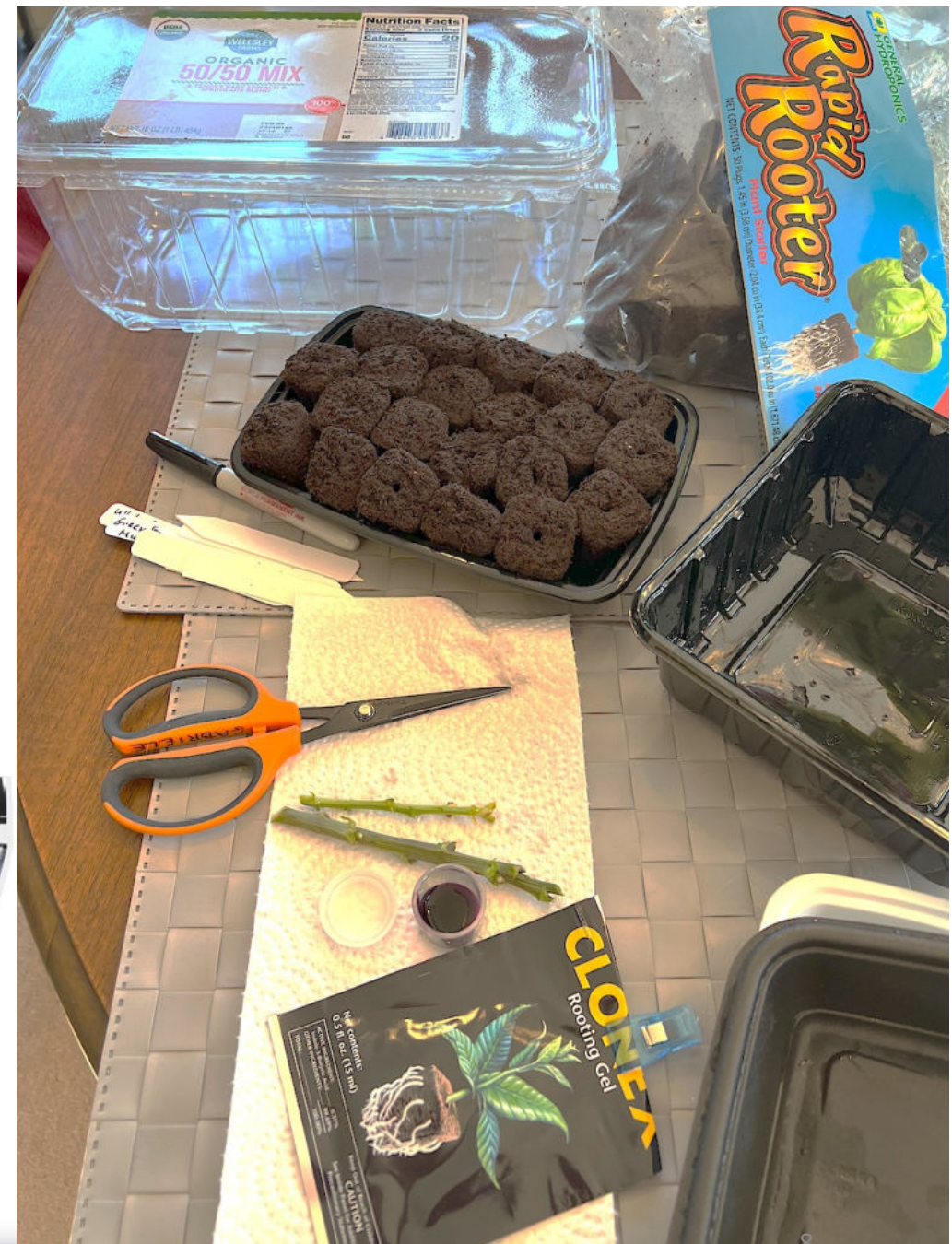
- Tubers will start to 'eye up' -> eyes swell, then sprout
- Different varieties may take more or less time
- Check them frequently!
- Waking-up is a crucial time when tubers can rot quickly, get infected or dry out!



Taking Cuttings

Supplies

- Tray with professional growing mix or sand; or use root plugs (Root Riot or similar)
- Scalpel, sharp knife or scissors
- 10% bleach to disinfect scalpel or knife
- Optional: rooting gel or rooting powder (IBA)
- Labels
- Spray bottle with water for misting
- Cover or a clear plastic bag
- Grow lights or bright window
- Heat mat or heater, ~ 70°F



Taking Cuttings



- Cut off sprout just above the spot where it emerges from the tuber. (Do not cut into tuber!)
- Or - wiggle sprout until it breaks from tuber
- Stem of sprout should not be hollow
- Ideal sprout length: 1.5 – 3 inches
- Remove lower set of leaves
- Optional: dip sprout into rooting gel/powder
- Make hole into soil or root plug with a pencil
- Insert sprout, firm soil around stem
- One leaf axil or node should be below soil surface, place where roots emerge



- Moisten soil, mist sprout
- Cover with clear dome or plastic bag
- Keep out of direct sunlight until roots formed
- Keep warm @ 70°C – use heat mat with thermostat
- After 3-4 weeks roots should have formed
- Expect failures!





Some of these sprouts are already a bit large – for large sprouts remove lower leaves and cut large leaves in half

**Mini-indoor greenhouse,
Cheap, easy to disassemble,
plastic cover provides
increased humidity**

**Add heat (e.g. a small ceramic
heater with fan) & lights**

**Inexpensive LED tube lights
work well**



**Small
Space Heater**

Start Dahlia Tubers Indoors (and what to do when done with cuttings)

- Don't over-water tubers during the first few weeks. Light misting is fine. Too much water will cause tubers to rot.
- Your potted tubers will grow stems and roots.
- On warmer days in May, start to acclimate your plants by moving them outside during the day but bring them back in at night (garage, sun porch works).
- If sprouts get too long (lack of light) pinch them back. (Try rooting the cuttings to create more plants.)



Resources:

Mark Oldenkamp of the Portland Dahlia Society demonstrates taking cuttings – (link from ADS website)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2hFvm6MMig>

Kristin Albrecht of Santa Cruz Dahlias

Pre-sprouting tubers: **<https://www.santacruzdahlias.com/videos>**

Taking cuttings on Instagram (requires registration)

<https://www.instagram.com/santacruzdahlias/guides/>