



# A gardener's delight

Once ragged wildflowers from Mexico, dahlias now come in a burst of bright colours with sizes varying from small bulbs to a huge 'dinner-plates.' So many variations of the flower can be grown with so little effort that it has now become a favourite all around the world, especially in the tropics.

As the air gets a bit colder and a thin mist arrives at our part of the world, the dahlia tubers get ready for a new blooming season. If you have not planted dahlias yet, this article will help you find out details about planting them and letting the exotic colours and shapes of the dahlia create an unforgettable flower show in your garden, balcony, or table-top flower arrangement.

Dahlias can be found at very low prices in almost all the nurseries around the city. You can choose from light-coloured flowers to high contrasting bi-colour or tri-colour ones. The most common dahlias here are 4-5 feet tall plants with flowers of up to 12 inches in diameter. These hybrids come in solid colours and light up your garden for the long season.

The cactus dahlia is also another kind for the garden which resembles a cactus with pointed petals and a full double bloom. A flower arrangement with the cactus dahlia and roses of contrasting colours creates the perfect fall atmosphere for any home.

While double-bloom dahlias are all the rage, growing them might be a bit of a constraint due to the space they take. Single flowers not only take up a smaller area to grow, they also have a simplistic beauty that's soothing to look at. These are only about two feet tall, making them easier to plant in the balcony.

You can also choose from water-lily dahlias, ball dahlias, and pom-pom dahlias, all named after the shapes they resemble. A personal favourite is the mignon dahlia, a small bedding flower perfect for window boxes with a nostalgic look. Choose your dahlia keeping in mind the place you are

the eyes facing up. Remember to leave enough space between each plant considering their size. For example, a big decorative dahlia will grow to occupy as much space as a rose bush so you might want to have a larger gap while planting these.

Dahlias thrive under direct sunlight so

you are done planting and staking the tubers. After that, you only need to water the plants once a week. The tubers will show foliage within 2-3 weeks and start budding soon afterwards.

Once the dahlias are in bloom, you can cut the flowers with the whole stem (which



going to keep them. You can buy tubers or small plants from your local nursery and start planting right away.

Dig a deep hole and prepare the soil with compost and put in a 5-10-10 or 5-10-15 fertiliser for healthy leaves and flowers. Once the soil is ready, plant the tubers with

choose a place in your garden with good coverage, or move the pots on your balcony to a bright place for at least 7-8 hours of sunlight. Big dahlias will need support once they are fully grown. Set a stake or two on the side of each tuber to avoid later worries. Firm the soil around and water well once

will be quickly replaced by a new branch) and use them for brightening any place. Enjoy the blooming season with its wondrous spectacle and when it's over, save the tubers for another year of vibrant colours.

**By Afsin Ahmed**  
**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**