

## DAHLIA

### Summer into Fall

Named after the Swedish Botanist, Andreas Dahl, the Dahlia is a beautiful and rewarding addition to any garden. They are ideal for the summer and fall border. There are more than 2000 varieties available and new forms are being produced each year. There is a vast variety of Dahlia flower types to choose from. The blooms can be a single or double open-centered, anemone type, cactus or quilled, ball forms or smaller pom-poms. All Dahlias make great cut flowers. Plant height and size can also vary greatly. The tall strains give stature to floral beds, fill in the back of the border or function as a summer hedge. The shorter varieties can serve as brilliant, compact border plants or as fillers in a perennial border. Dahlias are also great in containers. Dahlia tubers are available in the garden centre from the end of Feb. to mid May.

### CARE OF TUBERS

Newly purchased tubers should be stored in a cool location above freezing till you are ready for planting. Cool wine cellars or pantries are great storage areas. Tubers should be planted in the garden only after the danger of frost has past. One may choose to get a head start on the season by potting the tubers indoors 2-3 weeks before the last expected frost date. When potting make certain that the container being used has sufficient drainage holes. The soil used in the potting should be porous and free draining. Promix and or Mother Earth are ideal. Tubers benefit from a sprinkling of bulb dust at planting, as well as the addition of bone meal to the soil.

### PINCHING

After a couple weeks of growing and before the plant is no more than 4" tall the main stem should be pinched back to just above the first or second pair of leaves. This will help to encourage the plant to branch or bush out.

### PLANTING

Plant dahlias in full sun. Dahlias need plenty of water as they bloom and it is better to water deeply and well once a week instead of a light sprinkling every day. For spectacular flowers top dress the soil with bonemeal or muriate of potash in mid August at the recommended rate and intervals. Liquid fertilizers with a 15-30-15 formulation will also promote large showy blooms.

### IN THE FALL

To enjoy your plant year after year the tubers need some special care. After the first fall frost has lightly touched and blackened the foliage cut dahlias down to about 1 inch above the soil line. Carefully lift the tubers and shake as much soil off them as possible. Dry them for a few days in the mid-day sun, coat the stalk stump with bulb dust and layer tuberous roots between newspapers, or pack tubers with 2 to 3 inches of vermiculite and store tubers in a cool, dark, frost free place for the winter. Do not leave lifted tubers out over night to avoid injury from frost. Dahlias can be divided in the spring. Include no more than one or two eyes in each planting. Select only the sturdy medium sized roots for planting out after the danger of frost.