

July Dahlia Growing Guide: Fertilizing, Watering, and Scouting for Insects and Diseases

Fertilizing

When dahlia plants are four to five inches tall and have a good root system, fertilizing the plants will give them a boost and help with plant growth and development. Unlike some other garden plants, dahlias are considered heavy feeders and react positively to fertilizer. The label on your fertilizer will provide you with the chemical composition of the product. There will be three numbers on your fertilizer label, such as, 20-20-20. The first number provides the percentage of nitrogen in the fertilizer, the second number the percentage of phosphorus, and the last number the percentage of potassium. If you are a new grower and haven't trialed different types of fertilizer or haven't had your soil tested to understand the chemical composition of your soil, look for a balanced fertilizer, such as a 20-20-20, for your dahlias. Follow the label instructions in applying the product.

Watering

With the heat of the summer soon to be upon us, it is important to have a regular watering program. It is best to water early in the day and at the base of the plant if possible. In July, the plants will probably need two to three good soakings a week if we do not receive any rain.

Insects and Diseases

Summer is also the time to also begin scouting your plants for insects and diseases. Dahlias are susceptible to a range of insect damage and fungal, bacterial, and viral diseases and with the heat and humidity of summer you will start to see more problems with your plants. A great guide to identifying your problem along with suggestions on how to treat them, can be found at the [UC/IPM extension website](#). Many problems can be more effectively managed when they are small and scouting is a best practice for dahlia growers.

Submitted by Justine Dial and Laura Matz. Adapted from the Puget Sound Dahlia Association.