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## News from ADS! February 2021 - It's still winter



Photo Mystic Sparkler, Drumman, USA.

The dragons of Winter came late to the eastern half of the country. During January shoots from spring bulbs sprouted and grew. My thoughts began to turn to container dahlias—could I get a head start on the patio? Fortunately, I hesitated, and February came with freezing weather and more snow than we had in 2020.

It is best to plant out tubers after the last [predicted frost date](#) in your area. Over the years, the last frost date in the Mid-Atlantic has moved earlier, but not during February or even March in this area. See what the [\*Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society\*](#) says about the changes.

If you want to get an early start on planting, you can set the tubers in clean pots with a packaged soil mix. Tilt the tuber so that the growing tip is near the surface. Add a little water and wait for the tuber to put up a shoot. In early Spring this may take several weeks.

A good temperature range is 65°-70°F. If you desire, plant-heating pads with thermostats can be used, but they are not necessary. As a practice, I pot up the tubers I buy when they arrive. It is a matter of protecting my purchase, but it may not be necessary.

Some cultivars are quick to develop shoots, and others slow. Later in the Spring they will sprout more quickly. The same is true about cuttings. Tubers need not be put under lights before they sprout and require virtually no water. The shoot is generated by the moisture and hormones in the tuber. As the sprouts grow, they will develop rootlets and roots, and will need regular watering. The tuber will have done its job. February and March require a lot of **patience!** All will happen in due time.

[Watch](#) as Sarah Raven demonstrates how to pot up dahlia tubers and take cuttings from tubers potted the month before.



ADS Photo Contest - 2nd Place - Dahlia Portrait - Bear Creek Sunrise - Photo by Bill Meyer  
[See more winning photos](#)

If you buy imported tubers at a garden center or big box store, you will often find a small clump of tuberous-roots (a pot root) when you open the package. Some of the necks of the tubers may be broken. Just snip them off and plant the clump in a pot and hope that it will make a sprout. While these dahlias are cheap and available, I prefer to buy tubers from a [local dahlia society](#) or a specialty dahlia seller who packages individual tubers with sprouts.

Waiting (somewhat) patiently,  
Harry

## American Dahlia Society

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