

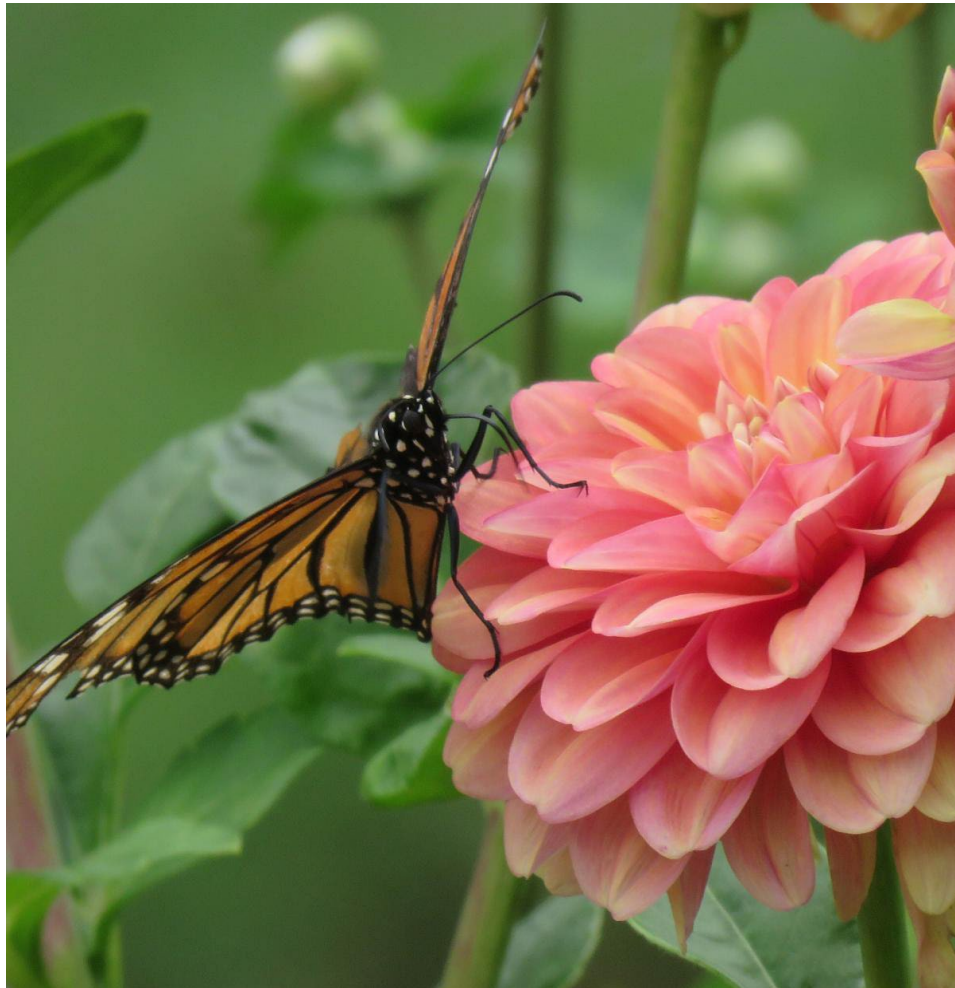


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April - It is Time to Think Dahlias

April 2022



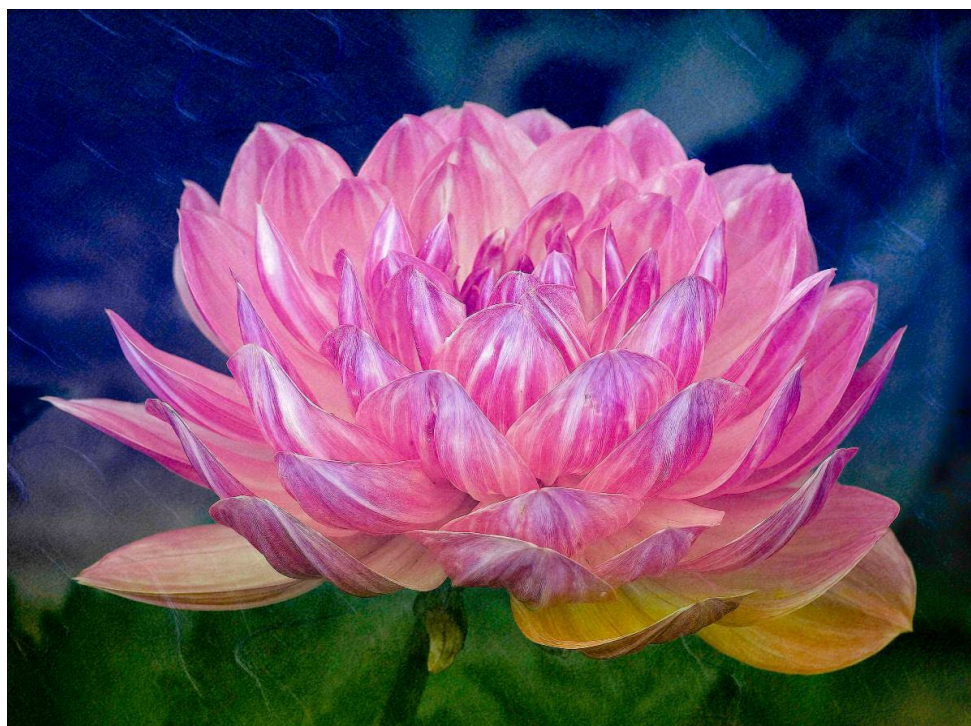
People's Choice entry, ADS 2021 Photo Contest -Photo by Kathie Brinkman

Whether you plan to grow a dahlia or two, or a hundred, April is the month to give them a good start. While planting time for most of us is still a month away, if the dahlia gets established before going into the ground, it is better prepared to meet the challenges of heat and drought after it is planted. I have frequently written that you can just put the bare tuber in the ground, and it will grow [\(info here\)](#) and that is true. Some cultivars are so vigorous that they will put up shoots in a bag of dry vermiculite. But why put them to the test?

A bit of botany will help. The initial growth of the dahlia comes from the tuber - which is technically a root. However, that is just the starter engine. If the dahlia is to develop, it needs to create roots and a stem. Those are the parts that will generate the power for the plant to grow and flower through the summer.

By potting up the tuber for a time before it goes into the ground, you can jump start the plant and better prepare it for the garden. In late March I took the tubers out of storage and placed them in flats (info below) with a mixture of Pro-Mix and vermiculite. I made sure the stem-end of the tuber was visible. A light sprinkle came before they were set out on tables. In essence, I turned the key in the ignition. Since the growing energy at this point comes from the tuber, neither light nor watering is necessary.

There were only a couple of eyes on about 150 tubers. I did not despair! As the days get longer in Virginia and the temperature warms, the eyes in the tubers will come out of hiding. When I put away the cut-up dahlias in the fall, I did not look for eyes. I put all the divisions from a clump in a plastic bag with vermiculite. In fact, some tubers will have hidden eyes, and some will not.



Second Place, ADS 2021 Photo Contest, Digital Darkroom Category - Dahlia in the Rain - Photo by John Erve

Now in Spring we play the waiting game. Eyes will emerge from the stem-end of the tuber over the next six weeks. I will then separate “blind” tubers from those with eyes. Even then, some of the dahlias that are put aside will show eyes for the first time in late May. One venerable dahlia grower said that he nips off a bit from the end of the tuber and smacks it on the bench a couple of times to get it going. Works for him?

I also have started some dahlia seeds in flats with a growing medium. Some have sprouted and have put out their first true leaves, Check out this [video](#) on growing dahlias from seed. It is a lottery because dahlia seeds seldom look like either parent. So much fun!

In my experience, supporting the tuber sales sponsored by your local Dahlia Club (list of sales [here](#)) is the best way to find tubers that will grow well in your area. You can also get a lot of advice, most of it subjective but useful.

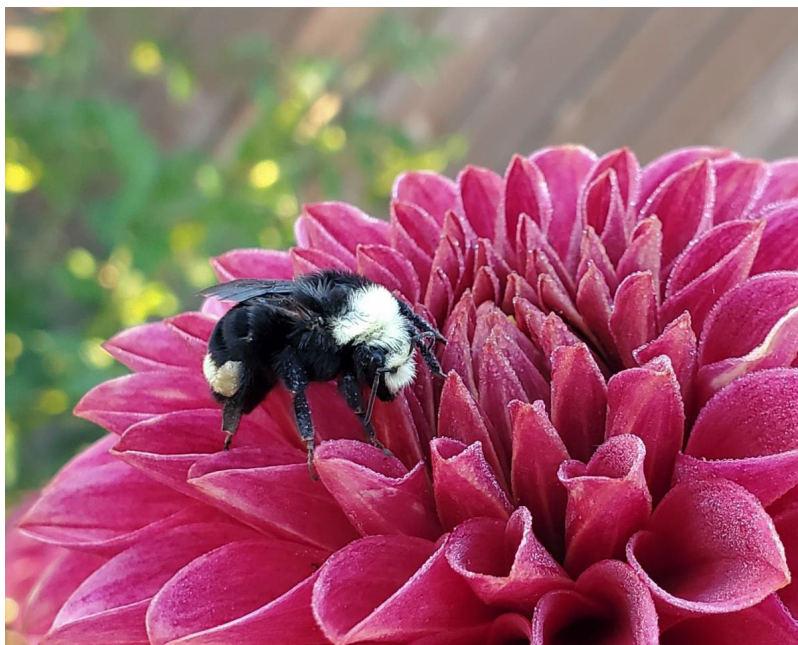
We have received numerous suggestions for what to name this Newsletter. The contest will stay open until the end of the month, and we will announce the winner in May.

When we reach the lull between seasons, we will discuss the very interesting results from our survey (also open until the end of the month).

April begins the season of discovery.

Start your engines!

Harry Risetto



First Place, ADS 2021 Photo Contest, Critters Category - KA's Rosie Jo - Photo by Kay Mackey

Last Chance

If you haven't responded to our Newsletter Survey, you have until the end of the month. Please, [go to the survey](#). We want your input.

Also, you have until the end of the month to help us find a name for the Newsletter. Submit your ideas [here](#). If your name is selected you will receive a dahlia book to enjoy.

Check out this news brief:

Dahlia growers team up with Washington State University virologist to stop viral diseases' spread. [Read more](#).

Links

Tubers can be started in pots with potting soil. If you have many divisions of one cultivar, it is easier to use a planting tray. There are numerous examples on the Internet. Here is one for [illustration](#).

There are many products for starting seeds. One example is the "Jiffy" family, widely available. Check [here](#) for Jiffy information.



[More information about the show.](#)

American Dahlia Society

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