

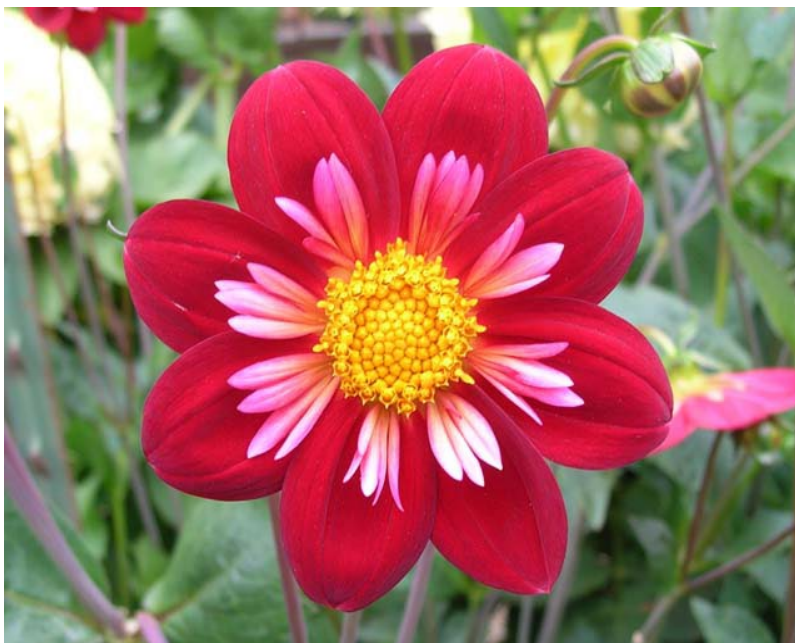


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February - The Dahlia Sap is Rising

February 2022



Kelsey Valentine - Photo from ADS archive

It has been 60°F in Northern Virginia for two days, but snow is expected in 48 hours. While I feel the need to get started with the tubers, I had the same feeling last year. The tubers were still sleeping and stayed that way for several weeks. Some growers disagree, the eyes will show with warmth and slightly moist soil. It is up to you. I will wait about another six weeks, and then move the tubers from bags to trays.

I received a message today from a friend who wanted to grow dahlias. She observed that her yard is mostly shady. There is one aspect of dahlia growing about which virtually everyone agrees. Dahlias need at least a half-day of sun to grow and bloom.

I so regret having to tell folks that at garden sales—particularly when they are excited about dahlias.

I sent some soil away for a soil test. The report showed a pH of 7.3, phosphorous was off the chart, and potassium was low. This is typical for my patch. I will add a top dressing to reduce the pH to below 7. When I fertilize in May, I will apply a time-release with little or no phosphorus. I am not afraid of nitrogen at the beginning of the season. It is water soluble. Consider this somewhat [pro-nitrogen](#) web article and conversely, see low nitrogen advice [here](#).

It is useful and not too late for a soil test. Your local garden center or Extension Service can point you in the right direction. Find testing information by state on this [webpage](#).

Dahlias are heavy feeders and the quality of the soil in the patch or container cannot be overlooked. I have some containers on the patio. It is easy to leave the soil alone for another year but so much better to empty at least half, loosen the rest, and refill the container with good quality potting soil.

Your outdoor garden raises a different question: should I [till](#) or [not till](#)? Some experts believe tilling aerates the soil and provides an opportunity to work in fertilizers, organic or chemical. Farmers have tilled for centuries. Others say that tilling upsets the microbial life of the soil and brings dormant weed seeds to the surface. The debate goes on...



2021 National Show - Photo by Rob Swaney

Help us improve this newsletter

The American Dahlia Society recently conducted a member survey. It inspired us to ask our subscribers, most of whom are non-members, how this newsletter could be more helpful.

We aim this newsletter primarily to the casual dahlia grower. We want to provide value to all our subscribers, ADS member or not - though we hope non-members will ultimately join local clubs and the ADS.

This non-member focused, subscriber survey contains nine questions and can be completed in a few minutes.

Thanks for your time.

Harry Risetto

[Answer the survey](#)



Links for your consideration

[Growing dahlias in cold climates](#)

[Growing dahlias in pots](#)

Pictured dahlia, Kenora Valentine - Photo from ADS archive



[More information about the show.](#)

American Dahlia Society

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