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Dahlia Talk *from tubers to blooms*

July - More Blooms?



Garden in Big Sur by Fran Heller

This month's Dahlia Talk is coming to you from Ohio. We had a lot of hot weather (high 80's) in June with little rain. We finally got some rain and temperatures are about where they should be now (around 80). We even got

a little bit of lightning. I've always heard that lightning puts nitrogen into the soil, but is that true? A little searching on the Internet corroborates that lightning does help nitrogen in the soil...but not by a large amount.

Hopefully your plants have had adequate nitrogen to this point. Are the plants growing evenly and have a nice even green foliage? Then the nitrogen level should be ok. Some folks say not to overdo the nitrogen as we move into blooming season. I follow this advice.

At my house we will continue with a mild organic fertilizer every couple of weeks. The real concern currently is insects. They all seem to be hungry for dahlia greens. The use of organic bug spray controlled our earlier aphids, and is doing a decent job on the current bug populations. Japanese beetles are moving into the area, so we hope for the best. We are also going to try, for the first time, an organic oil spray that smothers insects.



Trevor's Garden, Photo by Trevor Hoff

Most of July and early August will be devoted to grooming the garden. If you haven't done so already, top your plants by removing the central growing tip to get more blooms throughout the season. Do not delay. [Video.](#)

As buds begin to develop on your plant it is time for disbudding. Buds almost always come in a cluster of three, with perhaps two more at the node just below. Remove the side buds in the cluster of three and the two buds below if they exist. Be sure to remove the small stem below the buds you are removing. If you do this in the cool of the morning the buds/stems will pop right off. I know you may not want to remove potential flowers, but this practice will push the energy to the central bud enhancing the flower and it will keep the flowers from mangling each other. If you are not sold on this idea, experiment. Do some disbudding and evaluate the results. [Video.](#)

If you want to push for the very largest blooms with nice long stems, you may go down the stalk removing some laterals, thereby limiting the number of flowers on the plant. This is called disbranching. Consider this an advanced activity. See this [document](#) for details on all these pruning activities.

The plants will benefit by removing spent blooms. Don't forget to keep up with the tying/supporting of your plants. [More info. Video.](#)

While you are in the garden another worthwhile activity is cleaning around the bottom of the stalk. Remove excess leaves near the bottom of the stalk and any extra shoots/stalks coming out of the ground. Be sure to differentiate between leaves and laterals during this process. This clean-up increases air flow around the plant and will help later in the season when mildew wants to attack your plants. [Video.](#)



Design and photo, Jessica Becker

Finally, don't forget to **share the dahlia love**. Give a bouquet to add a little joy to the life of a shut-in, a patient, a friend, an overworked colleague...anyone! Everyone!

Happy Gardening,

Sharon (Dahlia Talk Editor)



ADS National Show Open to the Public August 26-27

Thousands of show-stopping blooms will be on display in the 18,000 square foot Grand Ballroom of the Holiday Inn, Columbia Riverfront Hotel and Convention Center in Portland Oregon. Hosted by the Portland Dahlia Society. **You are invited** (free of charge).

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