



## Dahlias

This family of tuberous perennials needs no introduction. With over 20,000 cultivars, conveniently available as packed dry roots, it is a mystery why they are not grown more often.

Dahlias are classified according to the shape of their flowers. Names such as ball, cactus, waterlily and anemone are self explanatory, whereas those selected for exhibition are grouped by the width of their flower heads.

Though the majority are grown for their showy blooms, a few have the added bonus of bronze or chocolate brown foliage. All varieties provide excellent cut flowers, whether they are the 25cm (10") blooms of the Giant Borders or dainty Lilliputs.

## Cultivation

Start by planting out dormant tubers in early May, or sprouted ones and rooted cuttings in early June. Choose fertile, cultivated and enriched soil in sun. Space between 30cm (12") and 90cm (36") apart, depending on variety and ultimate size, planting around 7cm (3") deep. Scatter Slug Clear Pellets between plants to protect vulnerable young shoots. To increase bushiness, pinch out tips of growing stems after three weeks. Medium and tall varieties may require staking to prevent wind damage - use bamboo canes or purpose made plant supports.

Water regularly in dry weather and apply a liquid feed of Miracle-gro All Purpose Plant Food if growth appears poor. The regular removal of faded blooms will prolong the flowering life of the plant. Keep watch for pest and disease attack, and spray if signs appear with Bug Clear or Fungus Clear (both are available as a ready to use gun or a concentrate for home dilution).

## Overwintering

Once the first frosts of autumn blacken the foliage, gently fork tubers out of the ground, removing surplus soil and fine roots. Trim stems to between 10-15cm (4-6") of the base and stand upside down to drain for one week. Finally, dust wounds and broken roots with green or yellow sulphur to prevent fungal infection and pack in dry peat for the winter. If tubers become shrivelled apply water sparingly to moisten the compost and encourage roots to plump up once again. Store in a frost-free place until spring arrives.

# caring for...

# Cannas & Dahlias

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### Haskins West End

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West End, Southampton SO18 3HW  
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### Haskins Roundstone

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### Haskins Snowhill

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*Dahlia  
'Ellen Huston'*



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# caring for... Cannas & Dahlias

## Canna - "Indian Shot Plant"

Once terribly unfashionable, these exotic and excellent garden plants are back in vogue, and very much in demand. They look fabulous in tropical planting schemes, combined with Palms, Phormium, Cordyline, Bananas (Musa), dazzling bedding plants and other "jungle" exotics. Alternatively, use as a focal point in the border, to make a bold, visual statement.



Canna 'Striata' in bloom

Originating in the forests of Asia and tropical North and South America, the Canna belongs to a genus of tender herbaceous perennials, that grows from a thick rhizomatous root. More often chosen for lush, paddle-like leaves than exotic flowers. The foliage comes in shades from jade green to beetroot red, occasionally vividly striped with yellow or orange. Blooms contrast with or complement the extravagant leaves in a wide spectrum of colours; cream, apricot, orange, gold, scarlet and crimson, often with a contrasting edge or speckles. As yet, white has remained an elusive colour to Canna breeders.

## Popular varieties

*'Cleopatra'* - jade green foliage, streaked with purple. Golden yellow flowers, delicately speckled with red produced all summer. Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm (5' x 20").

*'King Humbert'*, syn *'Roi Humbert'* vivid purple leaves, orchid-like bright red flowers. Height and spread 1.8m x 50cm (6' x 20").

*'Lucifer'* - Dwarf and very free flowering. Iris-like red flowers, edged with yellow produced throughout summer, against bright green leaves. Height and spread 60cm x 50cm (2' x 20").

*'Rosemond Coles'* - bright green leaves, vermilion-red flowers, up to 7cm (3") across, edged with yellow. Golden spotted throats and undersides to petals. Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm (5' x 20").

*'Stricta'* syn. *'Variegata'* - jade green leaves striped with yellow veins. Gladiolus-like bright orange flowers produced throughout summer. Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm (5' x 20").

*'Tropicanna'* - dark purple leaves, psychedelically streaked with pink, cream and green, crowned with brilliant orange flowers. Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm (5' x 20").

*'Verdi'* - bronze leaves and tangerine-orange flowers. Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm (5' x 20").

*'Wyoming'* - dark purple-brown leaves complement frilled orange flowers, up to 10cm (4") across, with apricot feathering.

## Cultivation

All varieties will grow happily as pond side marginal plants during the summer months, with up to 15cm (6") of water over their roots. Remarkably, they are also tolerant of boggy or damp conditions, in addition to ordinary garden soil. Not surprisingly, they relish frequent thorough watering and regular liquid feeds of Miracle-Gro All Purpose Plant Food to encourage lush, healthy growth and plentiful flowers.

## Cannas as pond plants

Cannas make exotic additions to any pond, when planted into mesh aquatic baskets. Line with sacking and plant using ordinary garden soil, topped with shingle. Position carefully on the marginal planting shelf surrounding the pond edge, or support on bricks below the surface. As autumn approaches, simply lift the entire planting basket from the pond and allow to drain, before treating as a containerised plant over winter.



Cannas are ideally suited to urban areas and sheltered town gardens, where they can be safely left to overwinter in the open ground. However, protect the crowns with a thick insulating mulch of straw. Alternatively, move containerised plants into the shelter of a shed or garage for the winter months.

In cold or frost-prone areas, Cannas are best used as attractive summer bedding plants, protected for the winter in a similar manner to Dahlias or Gladioli. Lift in October or November once top growth has been blackened by frost, remove loose soil and cut away foliage. Label the plants and stand to drain upside down in an empty seed tray, in a cool, but frost free place. Dust wounds and broken roots with green or yellow sulphur to prevent fungal infection. Finally, set in trays of dry peat, vermiculite or sand, with just the tips showing. Store in a cool, dry, frost free place. Inspect periodically over the winter and moisten slightly if the roots seem completely dry. If rot develops, cut it out completely and dust with sulphur.