

Hort Tips and News

How to disbud your Dahlias for better blooms

Compiled by Sandy Welches, MGV 2005

When you disbud a dahlia, it allows the main flower to blossom to its fullest potential. When you don't disbud, the other buds that grow out of the flower can stunt the growth of the main flower. Now, when you disbud, you want to locate the main flower of the group (3 buds usually, sometimes 2) and then just pull out the buds that are growing next to it. There is no true right or wrong way to disbud so any way you remove the buds is fine.

Good, strong stems mean quality flowers in dahlias, especially if you are growing them for cut flowers. You can also encourage sturdiness early (in June and July) by pulling off weak stems at ground level when the plant is around eight inches tall.

Pinch out (or snip off, if you prefer) the tops of those remaining to encourage branching. As flower buds start to develop, usually in later July and August, disbud by taking out the two smaller flower buds below the central flower on a stem, and you will get a finer central flower.

As you'll remember from your MGV training, this is the principle of 'apical dominance': lower buds are suppressed by the topmost bud.



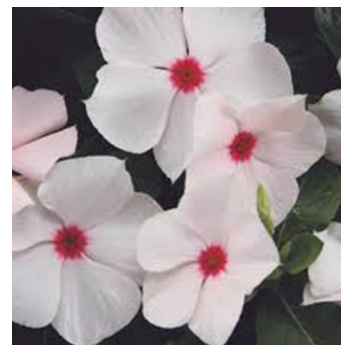
The two pointers show the small buds on both sides of the large bud.

Houseplant yields anticancer drug

A periwinkle from Madagascar, often grown as a house plant in the UK and USA, could help transform production of a key medicine used in treating cancer.

It has been long known that *Catharansus roseus* contains small quantities of vinblastine, a compound that inhibits cell division. It is already an important chemotherapy drug used against several types of cancer, but extracting the chemical proves to be time-consuming and expensive, with 900kg (almost a ton) of dried leaves yielding just one gram of vinblastine.

After a 60-year search for the mechanism the plant uses to create vinblastine, scientists at the John Innes Centre in Norwich, UK, have now used genome-sequencing techniques to find and identify the genes responsible. Their discovery opens the way for much more rapid production of vinblastine in the future. Search "Madagascar-periwinkle-pathway" at www.jic.ac.uk



www.provenwinners.com

(2018, August). RHS Advice. *The Garden*, volume 143, part 8, p 17. Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, London, UK.

Caution: this article does NOT suggest, promote or endorse the direct consumption of *Catharansus roseus*; nor does it promote the medicinal benefits of this one ingredient or as part of a complex drug. This article simply highlights its use in basic scientific research and drug development.

**And from the Ohio Gardener's
"Ask the Garden Pros"**

Besides mums, what are a few other container plants you would recommend for containers for fall color?

**Answer from Bee Fisher Kocher, Fisher's
Gardens, Reynoldsburg:**

Full arrangements are the most interesting because you have to be the most creative. At Fisher's Gardens we use edibles, such as *Beta vulgaris* 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard because the stems come in fall colors -- yellows, reds and oranges. Another "outside the box" fall container plant is *Capsicum annuum*, the 'Medusa' ornamental pepper, with its fiery orange and red peppers. Instead of a spike or grass in the middle of your container, try using ornamental millet -- *Pennisetum glaucum*. It gives great height, dark fall color, and feeds the birds.



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www.onalee.com Ornamental millet

Question: Besides mums, what are a few other container plants you would recommend for con-

tainers for fall color?

Answer from Carole Moulton, Cahoon Nursery & Garden Center, Westlake

For fall color in containers, we like to use ornamental grass, especially *Hakonechloa macra*, 'All Gold,' variegated Japanese forest grass. It provides a light flowering texture in a bright yellow or yellow green. Coral bells -- *Huchera* spp., and x *Heucherella* cultivars -- are also quite popular. Try 'Sweet Tea' or 'Caramel,' which offer wonderful fall-colored foliage. Fall pansies -- *Viola* spp. -- are an excellent annual selection once the heat of the summer has waned. Pansies offer a variety of colors and will bloom well into the late fall.



www.theplantfarm.com

Asparagus Maintenance

Question: I planted asparagus this spring, and I am not sure what to do in the fall.

Nothing! You need to let the asparagus ferns continue to grow until a hard freeze (when they are good and brown) or you can cut them back in the spring before they start growing again. I leave my ferns alone, and I have to say, the fall color is a spectacular golden yellow. I cut them back in March, before they start producing for the spring. Letting the ferns grow until they are killed by cold temperatures helps establish a strong root system.

To obtain a healthy stand of asparagus, if you just planted the 1-year-old crowns this past spring, only harvest about half of the crop next spring. The recommendation is to harvest minimally for the first two seasons, and go for the full harvest in the third. It takes about three years for the plant to hit full producing stride. For the first three years, fertilize prior to spear development, and after that, fertilize at the end of your harvest period. Test your soil to know exactly which nutrients are required for optimal production.



Bennett, P. (2018, September/October). Ask the Expert. *The Ohio Gardener*, pp. 6,7

More from this issue of *Ohio Gardener*...

Lots of good stuff this month, so here's one more inquiry from the "Ask The Expert" page.

Weeds appear in fall

For some reason, it seems like I have a lot of weeds coming up in my vegetable garden

in September and October. They hang around for the winter and then continue to grow in the spring. Freezing temperatures don't kill them. They are a real problem in my garden. What should I do? Pam Bennet answers:

What you are likely seeing are winter broadleaf weeds. The seeds germinate in late summer and early fall. Plants grow slowly during the winter months and take off like gangbusters when it warms. They quickly go to seed, producing copious amounts of seeds that lead to more weeds next fall. *The key to control is to prevent them from going to seed, and the best time to control them is in the late summer and fall, prior to germination.*

Pre-emergent herbicides can be used in the late summer, prior to seeds germinating. However, it might be a little challenging if this is in a vegetable garden. Be sure to read the herbicide label to make sure it is safe to use. In addition, use mulches in the garden to help prevent seed germination. After the vegetable garden is done producing, you can till the area, killing those plants that have germinated. Keep an eye out, as you may have later germination of more seeds after you have tilled. CAUTION: Be careful not to rely on tilling for complete control of these weeds: over tilling breaks down soil structure and can damage a quality soil.

You can also use a post-emergence herbicide after the crop has been harvested. Again, read the label. *Fall herbicide applications will be more effective than spring.*

Some of the most common winter annual broadleaf weeds in Ohio include hairy bittercress, purple deadnettle, henbit, corn speedwell, chickweed and shepherd's purse.