



Common Problems

Pests:

- Snails & Slugs
- Aphids
- Thrips
- Spider Mites
- Leafhoppers
- Earwigs
- Caterpillars
- Deer
- Rabbits
- Voles
- Squirrels

Snails and Slugs:

How To Identify

Yellow leaves with irregular shaped holes or shredded margins typically indicate that slugs or snails have made themselves at home in your dahlia patch. The presence of a slippery mucus trail helps distinguish these guys from other chewing insects.



How to Prevent

- keep beds tidy and free of hiding places
- use soaker hoses or drip irrigation to keep leaves dry
- create rough surfaces around stems e.g. crushed eggshells, diatomaceous earth or coffee grounds and replace the materials after rain or watering
- copper barriers can also deter them
- planting dahlias in containers makes access harder

How to Remove

- put beer or a mixture of 1 cup water, 1 tsp sugar and ½ tsp of dry yeast in a shallow container and put on the ground or in a small hole near each plant
- spray with a hose
- remove them by hand early in the morning



Aphids:

How To Identify

Yellow, distorted leaves and a sticky black substance on your dahlias might indicate that aphids have settled in. These small sap sucking insects come in an assortment of colors but they are typically green and pear shaped with long legs and antennae. They can do a lot of damage and harbor disease, so it's important to address them promptly.



How To Prevent

Keep beds clean and remove weeds promptly. Monitor nearby plants for infestation.

How To Remove

A strong spray with a hose aimed specifically at the undersides of leaves will knock them off. Spray with mild dish soap and water. Horticultural oil and hand removal are also effective. Predatory insects like lady beetles and parasitic wasps can help.

Thrips:

How To Identify

Long and slender with two pairs of wings and body colours that range from transparent to black, these pests will leave little black puncture wounds on your dahlias' leaves and create a stippled, yellow pattern. They may also leave pale or dropping petals.



How To Prevent

Reflective mulch, resistant plant choices, and careful monitoring will discourage infestation

How to Remove



Forceful spraying with a hose, prompt pruning and beneficial predators (e.g. *Neoseiulus cucumeris*) will help control thrips.

Spider Mites:

How To Identify



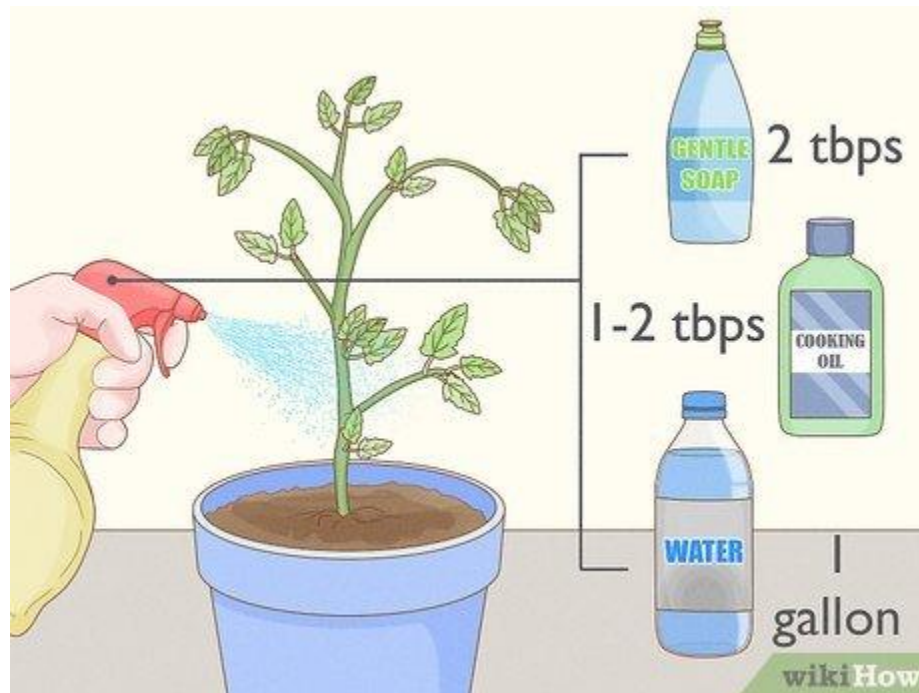
Tiny, fast-moving bugs with pale bodies are usually spider mites. Under a magnifying glass, you'll see red eyes and 6 or 8 legs, depending on age. Mottled yellow leaves that curl up and have a sticky web presence typically indicate that mites have moved in.

How To Prevent

Keep dahlias moist and keep beds free from dust. Monitor nearby plants carefully for infestation.

How To Remove

Swift, aggressive pruning and shaking by hand will help decrease populations. Oils and soaps can be used with some success. Insecticides aren't recommended.



Leafhoppers:

How To Identify



Often confused with aphids, leafhoppers move faster and jump sideways. They can be bright green or camouflage in colour and they have red-tipped antennae and wings. Stippled, pale leaves may curl or drop off if leafhoppers are feeding on them. They may also leave black spots behind.

How To Prevent

Spiders, lacewings and ladybeetles are all leafhopper predators. Allowing these insects free range in dahlias is good prevention. Keep garden beds tidy and free of debris in winter.

How To Remove

Forceful hose spraying and predatory insects can help reduce numbers. Oils can help discourage clinging to undersides of leaves.



Earwigs:

How To Identify

Adult earwigs are typically $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and dark brown, with rear pinchers that look like curved forceps. They are particularly active at night. Leaf and petal damage will look like large bite marks.



How To Prevent

Reduce moist hiding places and don't surround dahlias with groundcover or heavy mulch

How To Remove

Set newspaper traps



Caterpillars:

How To Identify

Caterpillars are worm-like and green to brown, with three pairs of legs behind their heads. Damage includes chew holes and rolled, webbed leaves.

How To Prevent

Reflective mulch, weed-free beds, and bird-friendly environments will help prevent infestations.

How To Remove

Hand pick caterpillars and drop them into sudsy water. Buy and use predatory wasps. Leaves can be coated with microbial oil as soon as caterpillars are identified.



Deer:

How To Identify

Look for shredded or rough-chewed leaves and blooms about 1-4 feet from the ground. Deer have no upper teeth and must twist and pull the plant parts they're eating. Watch for them late at night and early morning (when they typically feed) to confirm your suspicions that they're doing the damage.



How To Remove

Keep an eye out for deer late at night and early morning. Shoo them away with loud noises and/or bright lights. They might move on to someone else's garden if feeding in yours becomes more trouble than it's worth.



Rabbits:

How To Identify

Look for clean stem breakage at 45 angles somewhere between 2 inches and 1 foot above ground and watch for pellets.



How To Prevent

Reduce junk and clutter in the yard, so they have few hiding places. Let dogs and cats roam freely to encourage rabbits to graze elsewhere. Install sub-grade mesh fencing to keep them out.

How to Remove



Voiles:

How to identify



Chew marks near your dahlias' roots or stems and slow flower production are symptoms of vole damage. Look for gray to brown rodents with short bushy tails.

How To Prevent

Keep leaf and grass piles as well as dense groundcover patches away from dahlia beds. Bury mesh fencing 6-8 inches below grade to block voles out.

Squirrels:

How To Identify

Holes in the garden, scattered root parts, long ground burrows, and missing plants are all signs of squirrel presence.

How To Prevent

Look for old burrows and destroy them completely to prevent new squirrels from moving in. Eliminate bird feeders and water sources from your yard. Motion lights, loud noises and sprinkler systems are also unfriendly to squirrels.

How To Remove

Scare them away with loud noises and natural predators like dogs and cats.

How to Keep Squirrels Out of Your Garden



Other Common Problems:

Crown Gall and Leafy Gall:

- are bacterial infections that start with soil pathogens that cause growth abnormalities
- are often present in commercially farmed tubers where harvesting and packaging is highly mechanized and symptoms can go unnoticed, for example on large European farms
- travel in water and from contact with infected tools
- crown gall shows as round swellings that look like tumors at the stem's base or on the upper tuber necks, initially light green or cream-coloured and growing darker with age
- leafy gall looks like excess shoots that can appear to be a tight cluster of distorted leaves growing from the crown or along stems
- if one tuber on a clump is infected, the whole clump is infected and can carry the disease from one season to the next without being detected
- there's no known cure

To mitigate risk:

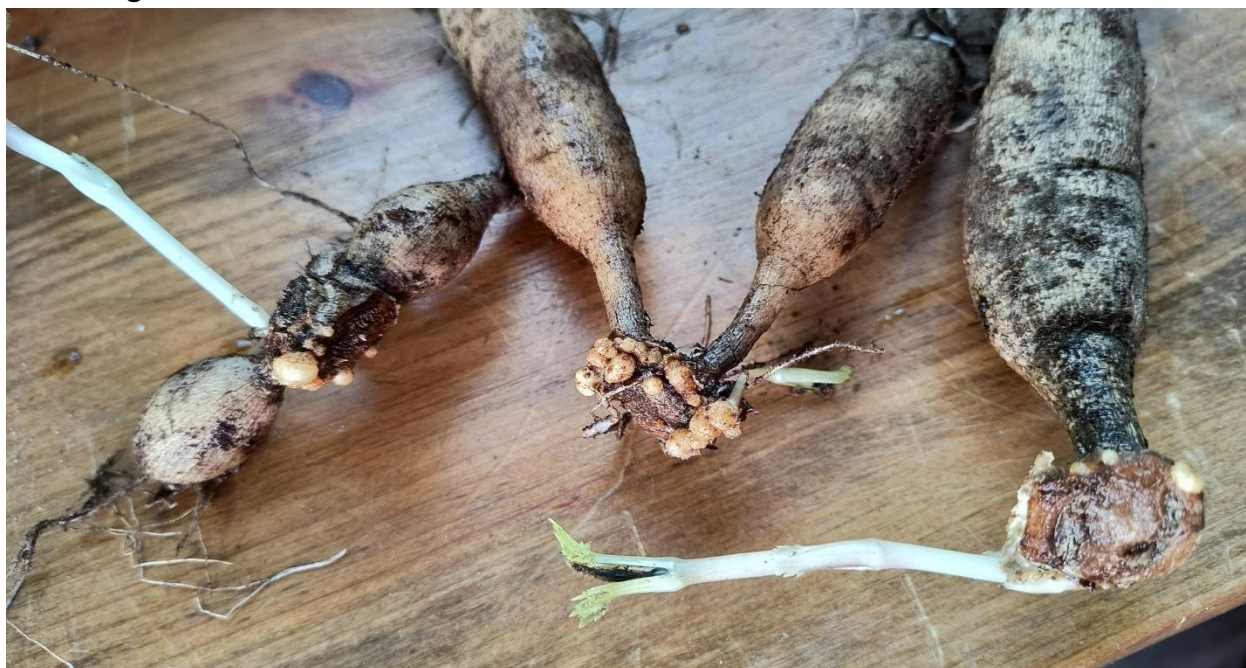
1. plant only tubers from small-scale growers e.g. local growers who dig and pack tubers by hand so problems are likely to be seen
2. take cuttings from healthy plants only
3. use fresh, sterilized potting mix each time
4. avoid watering from above
5. dip tools used for dividing and cutting in Lysol after each clump

If gall is detected:

1. put the whole plant and surrounding soil (and potting mix, if any) in the garbage, not the compost
2. leave the bed(s) fallow the next year then rotate with plants that aren't susceptible to gall for the next few years



Crown gall #1



Crown gall #2



Leafy gall #1



Leafy gall #2

Powdery mildew:

- causes white or greyish mold and distorts leaves
- it's worse late in the growing season

To mitigate risk:

1. space tubers when planting to allow adequate air circulation, 60 cm (2 feet) apart for small and Pompoms, 90 cm to a meter (3 feet) apart for medium and giant sizes
2. remove the bottom 3 or 4 sets of leaves to increase air circulation
3. water in the morning only and water the soil, not the leaves

**Rot in tubers after winter storage:****To mitigate risk:**

1. if you cut the stalks days before digging in the fall, cover the opening at the top with aluminum foil to prevent rain from collecting inside
2. turn the stalk upside down as soon as it's dug to drain any water that has accumulated
3. make sure tubers are dry when put into storage



Check on tubers during winter storage and when “waking them up” at the end of winter. Discard any that are all soft and have no eyes. If a tuber has some rot but is firm and has one or more eyes, the "engine" of the plant is still healthy—you just need to perform "surgery" to stop the rot from spreading into the tuber's body. Here's the best approach for saving them:

1. The "Surgery" Phase:

- remove every trace of rot: even a tiny bit of soft, brown or smelling tissue left behind will continue to spread once it hits the warm, moist soil.
- use a sterilized knife: dip your blade in 70% isopropyl alcohol between every single cut to prevent accidentally moving the rot from the stem into the healthy flesh.
- cut back to white: keep slicing away thin layers of the stem/neck area until you see pure, creamy white flesh with no brown or translucent spots.

2. Disinfect the wound: Once you have clean tissue, kill any microscopic spores remaining on the surface.
 - dip the cut end into a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) for about 20–30 seconds.
 - after the bleach dip, immediately coat the wet, raw area with cinnamon or sulfur powder to create a cauterized barrier and help the wound "callous" over.
3. The "Air Cure": Don't put these tubers back into closed storage or straight into the ground.
 - leave them out on a tray in a room with good air circulation (but out of direct sunlight) for 24–48 hours.
 - you want that cut area to feel dry and corky to the touch before it ever sees soil.
4. Potting Up: The "ICU" Method: Since the tubers are "wounded," planting them directly into cold, wet garden soil is risky.
 - pre-start them in pots using a very lightly dampened, sterile potting mix (mostly peat or coco coir).
 - keep them on the dry side: Do not water them until you see green growth poking through the surface. The moisture already inside the tuber is enough to get it started.

A Quick Warning on "Stem Rot"

Rot coming from *inside* the hollow center of the stem is harder to beat. If the center of the neck is a hollow, black tube, keep cutting down until you reach solid tissue. As long as the eye is located on a piece of healthy "crown" attached to a firm tuber, the plant can still grow even if the original main stem is gone.

Wind:

- drive a stake into the ground before planting
- plant the tuber with the eye close to the stake
- tie the stalk loosely to the stake as it grows, starting when the plant is about 30 to 45 cm (12 – 18 inches) tall and continuing about every 30 to 45 cm. Tie loosely to avoid damaging the stalk.

- if you insert stakes after planting, allow plenty of space to avoid damaging the tubers
- tomato cages are good substitutes for small plants

