

The Delight of Dahlias

For the gardener who wants a continuing bright summer-flower display from July through October, dahlias are the delight of the garden. With sizes and colors to suit every taste, dahlias range from tiny pompons to the large shaggy flowers as big as a dinner plate. Whether single, double, giant, large, medium or small, dahlias have velvety petals in a myriad of brilliant colors, and countless shades and hues.

Named after the Swedish botanist, Andrew Dahl, dahlias are actually part of the daisy family. They can range in height from 10 to 72 inches; are most adaptable, and can be planted almost anywhere in the garden, but they prefer an environment of temperatures ranging from 60 to 75 degrees. They can withstand direct sunlight if temperatures are cool. In areas where temperatures are normally above 75 degrees, dahlias should be

planted in partial shade. The dwarf bedding single-flowered dahlias are also excellent for outdoor containers at the front of the house, or on the terrace, balcony, or roof garden.

Dahlias can adapt to different types of soil, but thrive better in heavy moist soil, rather than in extremely light sandy soil. The most important aspect of growing dahlias is the preparation of the soil. They do particularly well in rich manured soil, and respond well during the blooming season when additional fertilizing is done.

As natives of the Mexican highlands, dahlias were first raised by the Aztecs, and given the name "waterpipe." Dahlias still live up to this name, and like to be well watered at all times. Watering should be sufficient to assure constant moisture around the root system.

Preparation of dahlia beds

in advance usually makes planting easier and more rewarding. Ideally, a thick layer of well-decayed manure or humus is tilled into the dahlia beds. When planting time arrives, after the last frost, the procedure is simple:

1. Dig a hole six inches deep for each root, and place it at the bottom, with the growing tip upward.

2. Cover with three or four inches of soil, except the dwarf bedding varieties which need only two inches to cover soil.
3. Allow three feet between the larger varieties, and at least two feet between the smaller varieties.

Drive a tall, sturdy stake into place before the roots are covered, to avoid damage. Stakes should be six to eight feet high. Smaller bedding varieties, of course, will not require staking.

All types of dahlias are su-

perb in borders, and the dwarf bedding varieties can also be most effective in window boxes, or other outdoor containers. If the flowers are not out for indoor arrangement, it is advisable to remove the faded flowers which will prevent seeds from forming, and exhausting the plant for future bloom. And, the more you cut the more the plant will flower.

Many different dahlias are now offered to the gardener, but it is important to purchase

tubers from reliable suppliers. Holland's bulb industry cultivates the best garden varieties from around the world, and Dutch-grown tubers will assure a healthy perfection in dahlias.

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE AND MUSHROOM SALAD
 ½ pound Jerusalem artichokes
 ½ pound mushrooms, thinly sliced
 2 tablespoons chopped shallots or green onions
 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
 ½ cup Vinaigrette Shallot Dressing:
 Romaine leaves
 Watercress sprigs (optional)

Artichokes and mushrooms make a splendid combination—and this marinated salad using both vegetables travels well to any picnic you may plan.

Scrub artichokes and cook them whole in boiling water until tender, from 10 to 15 minutes, then drain. When cool, peel and slice them about ½ inch thick into a bowl. Add the mushrooms, shallots and parsley and pour over the Vinaigrette Shallot Dressing. Mix lightly, cover, and chill. When you're ready to serve the salad, tuck Romaine leaves around the edges of the bowl and garnish with watercress sprigs. Makes 4 to 6 servings.



Larger dahlias will need stakes since the blossoms will sometime be more than the stem can endure. When planting, place the stake in the ground first. Then plant the tuber. The reason is obvious—if you plant the tuber first, you may pierce it with the stake.



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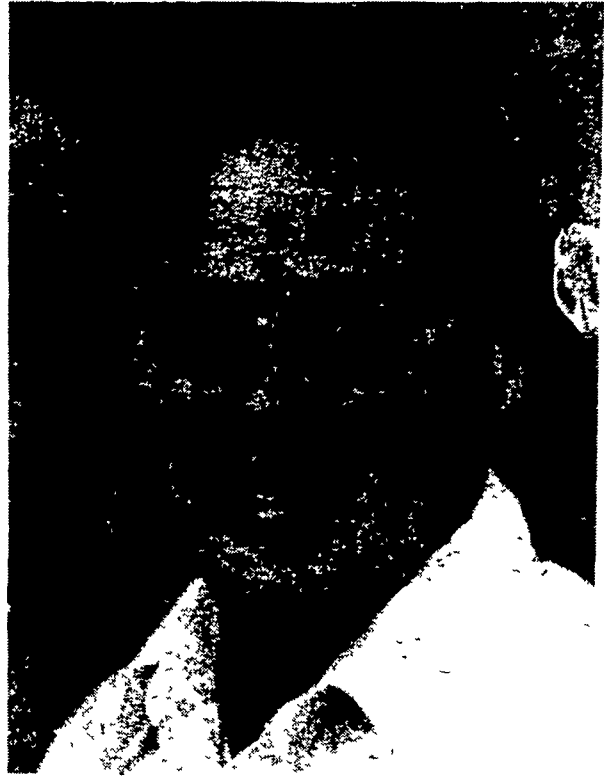


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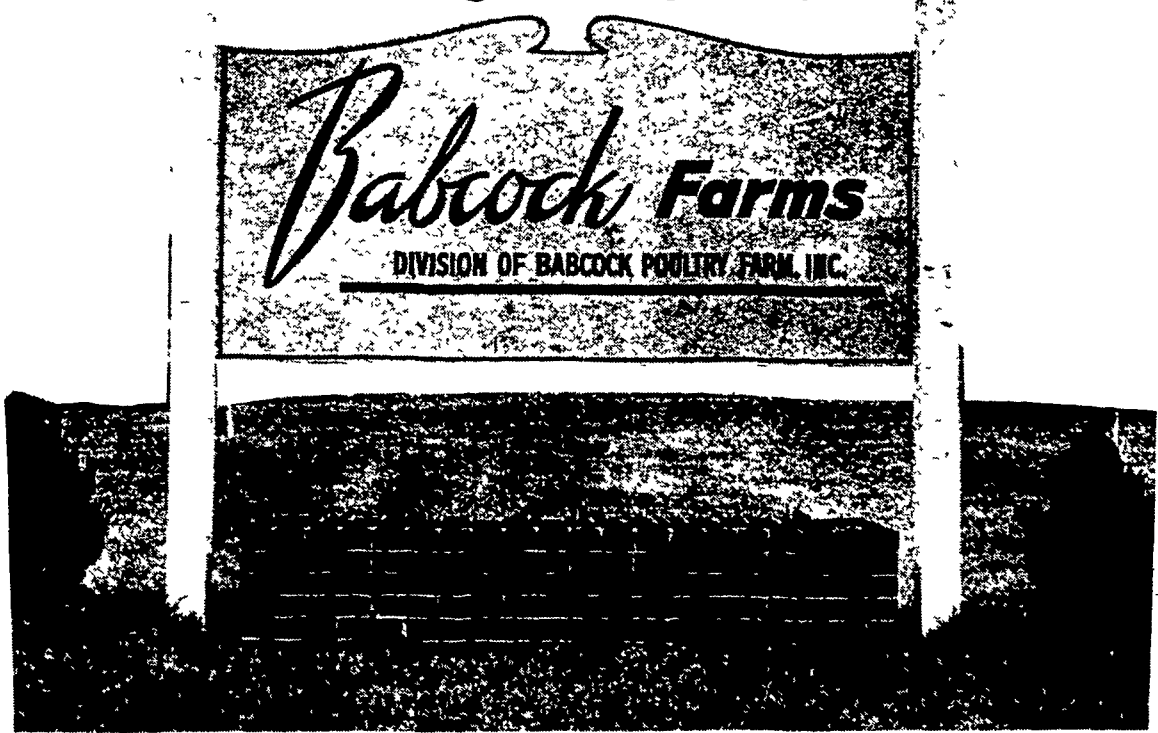


JAY HABECKER

Jay has been involved in poultry service work for 16 years, nine of these years as a Babcock Farms employee.

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