

Overwinter Care for Cannas, Dahlias, and Tender Bulbs

Wait till fall and after a couple hard freezes so that the tops have browned completely, then whack them off just above the ground.

Using a shovel, pop the bulb out of the ground.

By shaking, rolling, cutting and / or washing, get 99% of the soil off.

If there are any aged or shriveled looking parts, cut them off and discard them.

Dip or wash the bulbs in a solution of 9 parts water to 1 part household bleach*. (Do not rinse after this but do pat dry).

Place in a cardboard box, both nesting and covering the bulb with loosely crumpled newspaper.

Keep in a cool, dark, but not freezing place between 40° and 60°F. A 55°F basement or garage is ideal.

Check them a couple times over the winter. If bulbs appear to be shriveling from dryness, drop them in cool water for a couple minutes, pat dry and return them to storage. If there is any sign of mold, repeat the bleach solution, then pat dry and re-store.

At frost free date (usually mid-April to mid-May, depending on your area), plant the bulbs setting their highest point a couple inches below the surface. Adding compost and a slow release fertilizer to the backfill soil will help them grow bigger, faster and better.

Comments:

Some people choose to take their chances and leave them in the ground. In areas where ground does not freeze deep or for extended periods of time, tender bulbs may overwinter on their own. If you're on the borderline weather-wise, you can increase the likelihood of survivability by covering over the area with a couple inches of fresh mulch as winter approaches.

Others look at it differently. These type plants give a huge value of large, long season colorful display for a not-exorbitant amount of money, so some people treat them as annuals and replace them each spring. Naturally, this is entirely up to you, your budget, your time and lifestyle.

*As with all substances, handle with care and respect, taking all precautions as to safety.