

GROWING DELPHINIUMS

Where to Plant:

- Sunny location with at least a half day in the sun.
- Don't plant under or near trees.
- Well drained, fertile soil. (Mix in well-rotted manure or compost.)
- Plant 2 to 3 feet apart.

Watering:

They need regular watering (whether from rain or irrigation).

Fertilizing:

Add organic fertilizer and compost in spring. Alaska Fish Bone Fertilizer from Alaska Sea Ag in Palmer is one of the key ingredients I use. www.alaskasea-ag.com

Choose a balanced fertilizer that is not too high in nitrogen.

The following is the recipe I use: 3 parts Alaska Fish Bone Fertilizer, 2 parts bone meal, 1 part rock phosphate, 1 part green sand, 1 part kelp meal and 1 part blood meal. I use a cup around each delphinium.

Thinning:

Pop off all but the very strongest shoots. Leave 3 stems for delphiniums in their 2nd year; up to 5 stems in their 3rd year; and up to 7 stems for more mature plants. Do this when shoots are 4-6 inches tall.

Staking:

Start the staking process early. Circle the stems with twine around the 3 stakes every 12 inches until just below the flower.

Weeding/Mulching

Mulch in the spring/early summer. It helps suppress weeds and aids moisture retention.

Pests:

Look for the defoliators in late May to early June before they do much damage. Watch for and protect your delphiniums from slugs/snails as they love the new shoots.

Care after Flowering:

- Cut spent flowers just above the lateral blooms. Once these are finished, they should be cut off as well.
- Don't let them go to seed.
- Keep them watered.
- Don't cut the delphiniums down until the last possible moment in the fall as they are building up resources for over wintering.

Starting from seed:

Become a member of the Delphinium Society in order to get seed. www.delphinium-society.co.uk/Membership.htm

Store seed in a sealed container in the fridge. The seeds are poisonous.

Sow in February for a single flower spike in bloom by late summer.

Don't sow too deeply – cover with a thin layer of seed growing medium or vermiculite.

Firm the surface gently. Don't let them dry out. Add fungicide to the water to help prevent damping off. Try to keep the temp between 60 to 70 degrees. Seeds should germinate within 2-3 weeks.

Divisions:

Not recommended. If there is any rot or virus in the crown, dividing the plant will only continue that problem. Older delphiniums may not survive the disturbance.

Cuttings:

- When the shoots are 3-5 inches long and between ¼ and ½ inch in diameter, they can be removed and rooted.
- Use a sharp knife to cut the young shoots off where they join the crown. Make sure they have a solid base with no holes or softness or evidence of rot.
- Insert in rooting medium and place away from direct sunlight in a cool place (60 degrees). Takes 4-6 weeks to root (tips start to green up and grow).
- Transfer to pot and disbud any flowers the first year.