



How to over-winter your dahlias

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There is not just one good method to over-winter your dahlias. What is shown in the following slides is the process that has worked for us over the last 10+ years.

The basic process is to: 1. cut down; 2. dig up; 3. clean; 4. divide and 5. store. Following this approach can usually provide you with several healthy tubers from each plant that may be grown the next season.

It is also recommended that you visit the American Dahlia Society website (www.dahlia.org) which contains several articles on over-wintering dahlias.

When a heavy frost or freeze is forecast cut your remaining blooms and bring them in the house to enjoy



Because this ...



... will become this very quickly




The first step is to cut the plant so you have about 9" of stalk above the ground to serve as a handle. Ideally, let the plant stay in the ground this way for several days to help set the tubers.




**Dig
around
the plant
about 12''
from the
stalk.**





Gently pry the clump of tubers out of the ground. Very carefully pulling up on the stalk can help this process.

A photograph showing a plant root system with several tubers and stems in dark soil. The tubers are light-colored with dark spots and are attached to a central root system. Two stems are visible, one green and one brown. The soil is dark and moist. A green hose is visible on the left side of the image.

**Once out of the ground,
hose off the dirt from the
tubers.**



A home-made device like this can make the washing process easier.

The tuber clump could look like this after cutting off the stalk.
Also cut off the skinny roots growing out of the tubers.



After washing let the clump dry for a day or so in
a shady place before dividing.

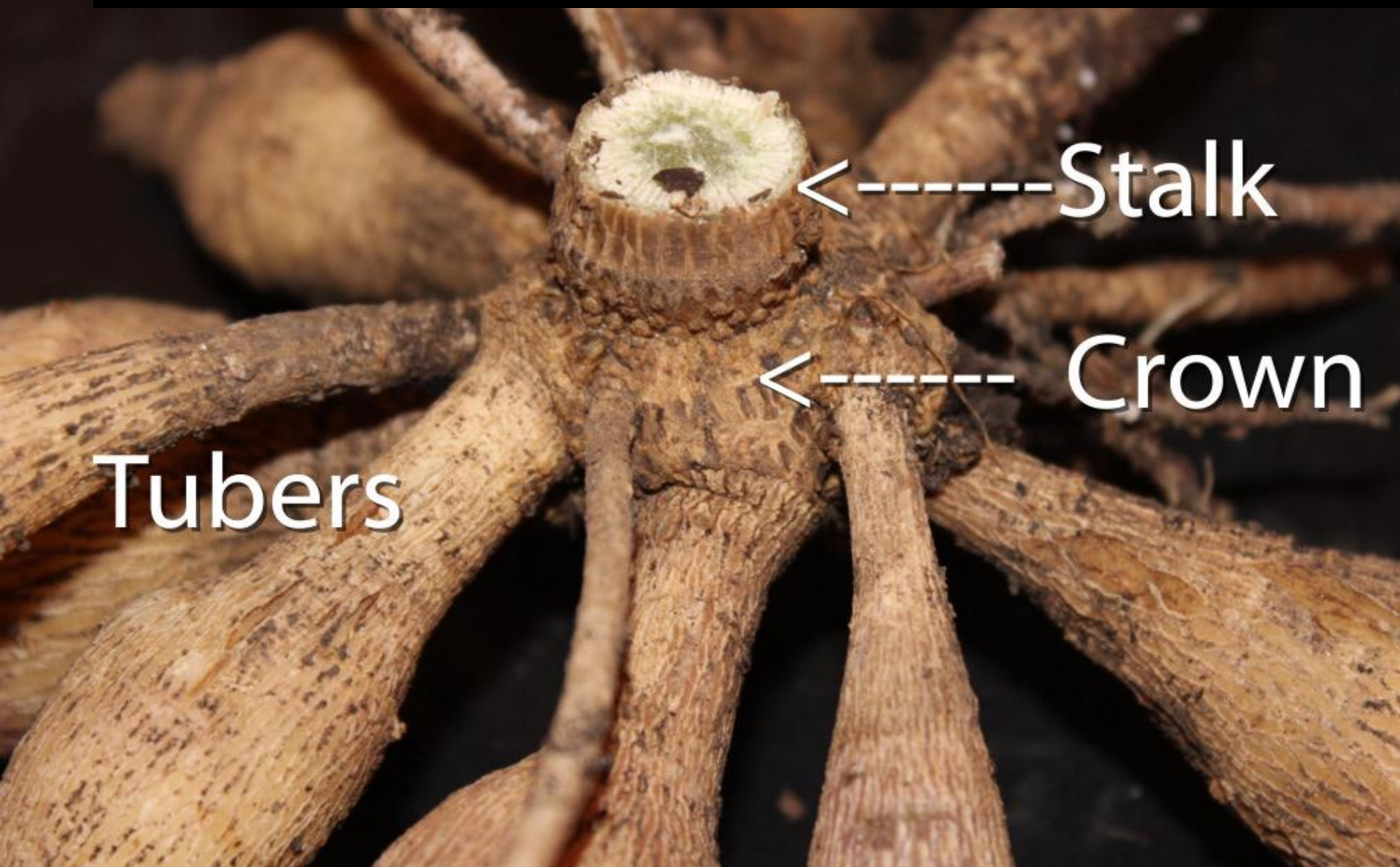
Top view of a clean clump. The mother tuber which was planted in the spring and from which the dahlia plant grew is now spent and should be thrown out.

Mother Tuber --->

The thin tubers are not likely to survive over the winter and should be discarded.



The crown is the section that connects the body of the tuber to the stalk. Sprouts emerge from the crown. Therefore, when dividing tubers it is essential that the crown and body remain intact.

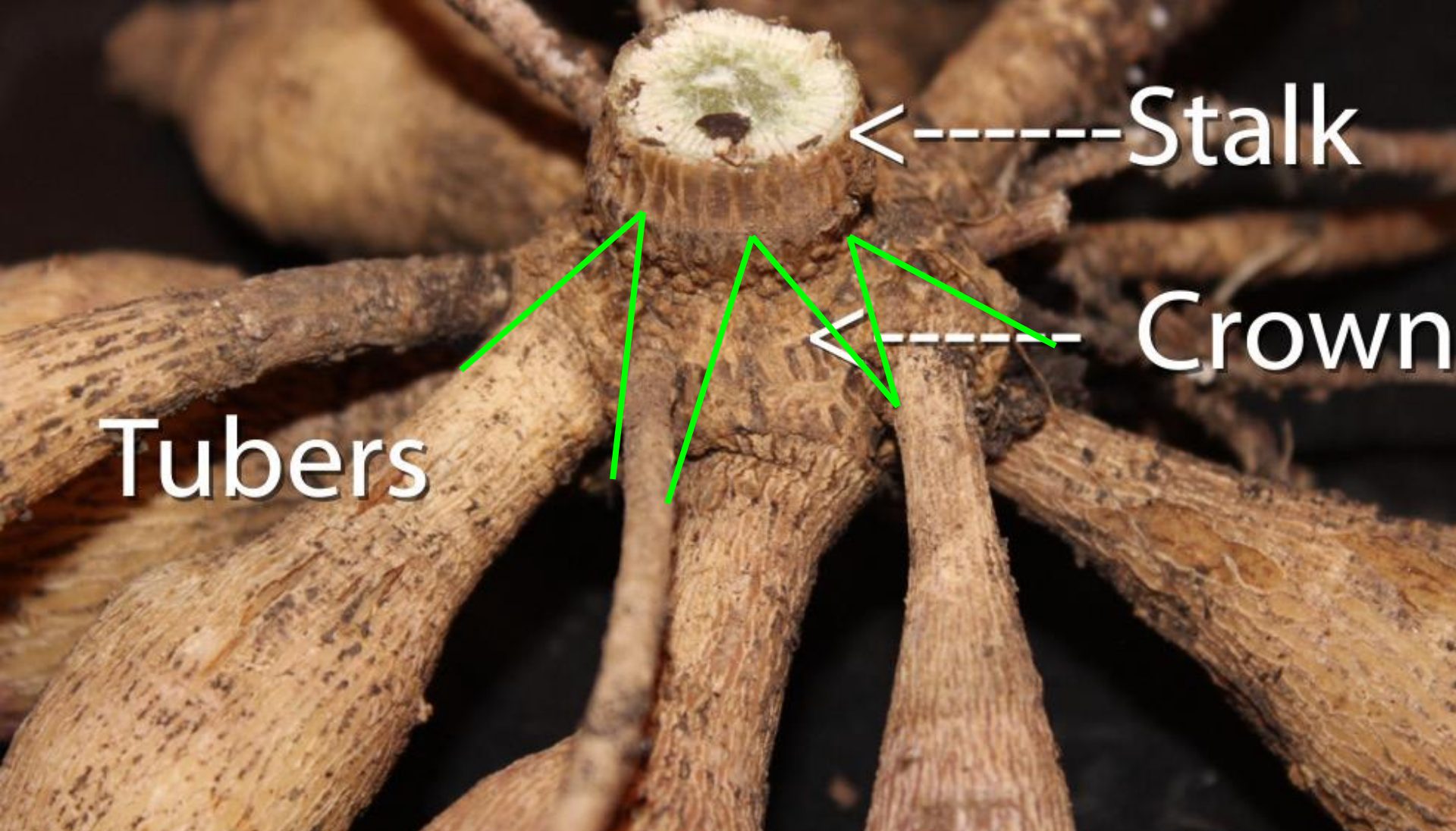


Stalk

Crown

Tubers

Using a sharp knife or hand pruner, cutting along the lines shown in green below will start the division process.



Here is an example of a before...



... and after.

Note that the size of the tuber does not determine the size of the plant or the size of the bloom.



It is important to write the name of the variety on the tuber with a permanent marker. It will identify what you have in the spring and will also help you find the mother tuber when dividing the following fall.

Sometimes tuber clumps look like this; almost impossible to divide cleanly.



One solution is to cut in half or quarters and see what sprouts in the spring.



We like to store the tubers in an open plastic bag with pine shavings separating each tuber. The idea is to use a medium that helps retain the natural moisture of the tuber without drying it out.





We then place the open bags in cardboard boxes. The most critical part is to keep the boxes between 40 and 50 degrees until the end of March when you want warmer temperatures to bring the tubers out of winter hibernation and encourage sprouts to grow.

**Your goal is to have a tuber that
feels nice and solid and looks like
this in the spring**



So it can sprout and grow into a healthy plant



sprout

Note that the sprout emerges from the crown area,.

Good Luck!

Any questions?

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