

## Dahlia Report November 2024

With strategic water spraying during cold nights and frigid mornings to protect from freeze damage, I managed to cut many gorgeous dahlia blooms on November 2nd. I arranged these in two pumpkin vases as hostess gifts for my flower loving green thumb neighbor.



The pink Jersey Beauty still had many beautiful large blooms and buds. See Pooh, the Collarette variety with striking red and yellow petals. The red dahlia in the center was flourishing with many flowers. Café au Laut impressed me with still having huge gorgeous blooms to cut. In the center is the dainty flowered pink and yellow Caribbean Fantasy. This variety was a disappointment with being very late in the autumn to bloom. Perhaps starting tubers inside in April will coax earlier flowering next year.

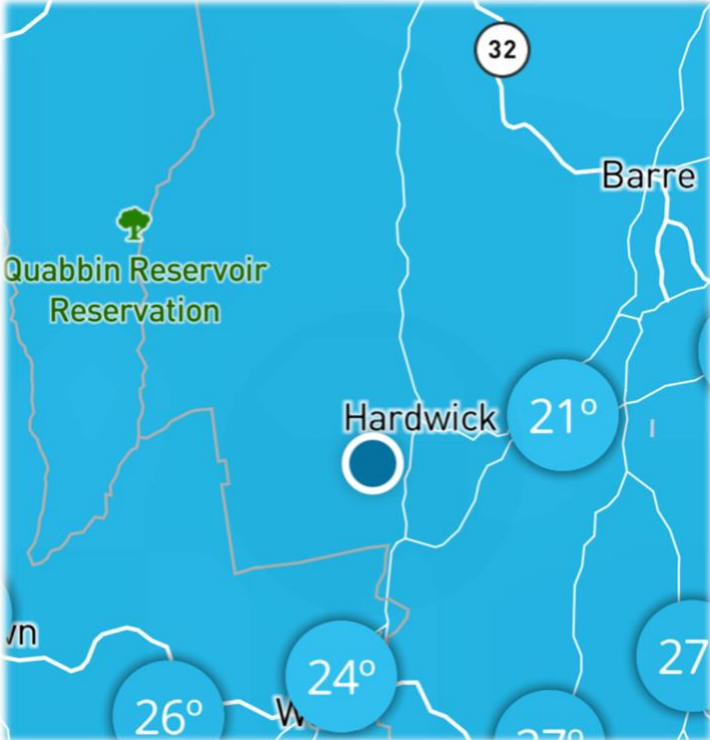
The pumpkin variety is Winter Luxury. I removed the seeds and rinsed them using a colander. I spread the seeds on a baking sheet, sprinkled with salt, and baked for 375F for about 20 minutes. Stirring at 5-minute intervals prevented over browning. When not used as a flower vase, Winter Luxury pumpkin flesh is delicious as a custard pureed with cream, eggs, brown sugar, cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, ginger powder, and vanilla and baked at 350F until cooked. Variations on the custard recipe include sorghum syrup, molasses, mace, and/or cloves.



Above, the magenta Gomphrena, aka Globe Amaranth, have been a flowering delight all summer and fall. Another longtime favorite is Strawberry Gomphrena as shown by the single flower head. The light pink Gomphrena is nice in arrangements, too. All Gomphrenas last for weeks and dry well. My Passion Flower, aka *Passiflora incarnata*, vine is out of control and strangling other plants with aggressive lateral root spread and thick foliage. This year I began to prune the growth aggressively. I find the vine stem ends are gorgeous in vases. Oklahoma Zinnia mix continues to be a great performer with excellent cutting flowers over many weeks.



After a hard frost on November 3<sup>rd</sup> without my intervention with water spraying and sleep deprivation, the foliage turned brown.





Prior to digging I used a serrated knife and handsaw to sever the dahlia main trunk at ground level. With care I spaded gently and reverently to avoid damaging and breaking the fragile tuberous roots. Some varieties are much harder than others to remove from the ground intact. I was pleased with my digging outcome for Pooh. This variety wowed everyone with cheerful and striking blooms. I drew casual buyers at the Hardwick Farmers Market by simply offering a vase of Pooh flowers for sale on my table.

I am hoping that I will have better success with overwintering dahlia tubers with the generous use of white pine shavings. Last year, I left chunks of wet soil on tubers. I stored damp tubers in plastic weave livestock feedbags in a high humidity root cellar filled with many buckets of potatoes and squash. In April 2024, I found with dismay horrible rot on many tubers. Some I saved by with harsh surgery. Others did not survive and ended up as compost. See with Pooh below that I have removed most of the soil with my hands. I did not wash any of the tubers. This year's prolonged drought makes it hard to find any wet soil.





Subsequently, I cradled the tuber mass in a bed of white pine shavings in a plastic feed bag.



I am very excited about Pooh's promise for 2025. Please let me know if you want a gift of a tuber(s). I anticipate having plenty to share of Parakeet, Wyn's New Pastel, Red, Hillside Suffusion, Glamour Pink, Caribbean Fantasy, and Jersey Pink tubers.

I was appalled by the awful rodent damage inflicted on the Café au Lait and Labyrinth tubers. Destruction by Meadow Voles?! Hopefully, what little I dug from the ground on November 6<sup>th</sup> will survive winter storage and thrive in next year's garden.

