



NEXT MEETING: : 9 Feb. at 7:30 at 9th and Lincoln. Program: flower photography by Erik's friend, Dr. Larry Way. Who will bring goodies to share?

DIGOUT 2016

El Nino gave us a break. Saturday began cold and raining, making for sloppy exhumation of Pat and Erik's dahlia clumps. Sue and Valeria having already processed their own hillside dahlias, joined Sarah and John slogging in the muck to help, dig, transport and clean Pat's. Craig dutifully lopped down Tinnee's section. Tony searched out Chernobyl twine and balled it all up. Deborah and Lola held a dividing demo featuring her handy dandy oscillating tool. Pat



presided over the label duties. Erik set up a snazzy coffee maker as wonderful for warming bitterly cold hands as well as for producing delicious coffee. Young Nick cut wood for the potbellied stove to keep the clubhouse toasty and then worked tirelessly at any task asked of him—what a remarkable guy.

Shelly delivered five big pizzas to complement Lola's cherry cake. After this hearty break, volunteers celebrated the abatement of rain and breaking through of the sun by pulling weeds, spading over the dirt in Lou and Pat's kingdoms, and generally Zen raking the TearDrop to momentary perfection. Lola, Rose and Tony lopped Deborah's storm-ravaged plants and covered the remaining stumps with tinfoil, leaving it looking like a crazy party exploded there. Major appreciation shouted out to Karen who came early, worked steadily and left last of all. Wow.



EYE OUT FOR DAHLIAS

Erik spotted a very personal floral theme in the radiology department recently. To catch the public's eye, each announcement and sign featured a dahlia. Bob Papp couldn't hold himself back at the Christmas Parade in Long Beach when he spotted lovely marchers carrying the banner for Dahlia Lingerie. Can you blame him for stepping in solidarity with them for a few blocks?



OUR ARTIST IN MEXICO

Part Two of Kevin Woodson's Mexican Dahlia Anniversary trip

Xochitla and the Congress

In Mexico, our first stop was Parque Xochitla Ecológico. This two+ square miles-large garden in the mountains to the north of Mexico City is truly an Emerald City. Its gardeners care for the largest collection of species Dahlias in the world (26 of them; more about that later), and its pavilions and auditoriums host flower and horticulture events every week.

This year, Xochitla was hosting the annual Dahlia convention – or National Congress – and the flower was represented by gardeners, farmers, scientists, chefs, and artists. There were



international speakers from the German Dahlia Society, the Royal Horticultural Society in the UK, and, of course, the artist from San Francisco!



Genetics

How far can cultivators push the envelope on color, size, form, and aesthetic traits of the Dahlia? What nutritional benefits can be enhanced?

One important point presenters made is that much of the gene stock from wild Dahlias is still unexplored. While the rest of the world celebrates cultivars bred from only a handful of fundamental species plants, the majority of the species (at least 36 in Mexico) have not yet entered into the mix. Maestro Jeronimo, in fact, contends that there may be as many as forty species in the Mexican wild. To back that up, he presented his explorations and discoveries on his explorations of the mountains around Oaxaca.

In its horticultural mission, Xochitla gardeners are working with Maestro Jeronimo to bring samples of each of Mexico's species Dahlias into the gardens and care for them on display there. Among the giant varieties, desert Dahlias, and cloud forest flowers, the sensation of this season was the Dahlia Macdougalii, a mountain-top dwelling, tree-climbing vine. Although Xochitla boasts three of these impressive plants, none has yet flowered in the absence of their accustomed mountain mists.

Over the course of my stay in Mexico I concentrated my own creative energy on painting the species Dahlias in Xochitla. As a great fan of the exotic and sophisticated cultivars in our San Francisco gardens, I was surprised at the delicacy and majesty of the species Dahlias on display. We all know the Dahlia Imperialis, but how many people know that the Imperialis is only one out of at least five giant tree Dahlias? I painted flowers that towered over my head, or bloomed in the evening with a lavender gossamer elegance. In blooms no bigger than a dime, I saw the potential that gave birth to the thousands of cultivars and multiple forms we have today. Many of the species Dahlias have yet to be discovered by cultivators and gardeners outside Mexico. I hope the innovations they bring can deepen our understanding of our relation as gardeners to the fertile mountains and culture of Mexico.



Culture

In food, art, local communities, and global outreach, Dahlias play an integral part in Mexican culture, and are destined to increase that role dramatically.

Alfombras, or floral carpets are a well-known tradition throughout Mexico. At Xochitla, an enormous Dahlia Alfombra was composed on the main lawn. Taking up about as much space as a football field, this Dahlia artwork was lovingly put together by hundreds of students and volunteers from the local community. A tribute to the Mexican Dahlia, this alfombra was mainly created using colored wood chips. I'm delighted to say I got to lay down some colored chips myself!



In many smaller towns alfombras are made of actual dahlia flower petals. During Dahlia season, hundreds of ephemeral flower petal masterpieces representing Mexican history and religion are created using flowers as the medium. Although I did not get to visit myself, a nearby town, Huamantla, was having such an Alfombra celebration later that week, and covered main street with a mile of Dahlia artwork for a day.

The Dahlia's role in cuisine is also a major cultural factor for the flower. Although the Aztecs are only known

to have eaten uncooked tubers, modern Mexicans have developed an entire kitchen around Dahlias. At Xochitla I tasted Dahlia cookies and pastries made from flower, Dahlia-petal salads, Dahlia tea, and candies. Maestro Jose talked about the experimental kitchen / lab he maintains at the university, and the new recipes and uses he is discovering.

To be continued . . .

Kevin's show *Mardi Gras is Forever in Flowers* runs February 1-28 at Spark Arts Gallery 4229 18th St. between Collingwood and Diamond in San Francisco. All dahlianistas are invited.



IN MEMORIUM



Erik Juul left for greater gardens in early January. In the early '50's, Erik and Gerda Juul began growing and showing dahlias with a bang by winning everything at their very first show. Together, the Juuls introduced fabulous hybrids including Gerda Juul, Birds Nest, Juul's Pearl and the famous mignon singles Rembrant and Mathew Juul. Erik spent hours educating the public at the Golden Gate Park Dahlia Dell. Along with Lou Paradise, Erik and Gerda began the tradition of producing hundreds of cuttings for our annual tuber sale. His contributions to DSC and to the American Dahlia Society live on in so many ways and a bit of him lives on in every garden growing the dahlia he and Gerda created.

(For a few articles about Erik and his contributions to all things dahlia, check out [this article from The Chronicle](#) and [this piece from The Dahlia Society of California website](#))

Some of Erik and Gerda's introductions



Rembrant



Juul's Pearl



Helene Juul



Matthew Juul



Gerda Juul



Birds Nest



Astrid Siersen

Check out [this article](#) for more about these prolific hybridizers

Here are some wonders to add to your garden wishlist!



Cyma Warriar



Sugartown Sunrise



Hollyhill Ripple



**Hollyhill
Black Ripple**



**Hollyhill
Black Widow**



Akita



**Normandy
Wild Willy**



Myrtle's Brandy



Skipley Claudia J



Fuzzy Wuzzy

FULLFILLING FEBRUARY

I am still pulling dahlia clumps out of the garden. Because the soil drains so well, I have not experienced much rotting, despite our unrelenting rains. Sarah and John P came over to the Maus Haus for dremmel dividing lessons and whirred through a half dozen clumps each.



Rose has begun potting them up and stashing them in the loft to germinate. They need at least 62-66 degrees of heat to sprout. So far, over a hundred have sprouted in the loft and five in the Dell. The most important thing new green shoots need is **LIGHT**.

Major thanks to James for fiddling with my jerry-rigged lighting system to make my greenhouse fully functional again. In my greenhouse, I extend the light period by adding five hours of augmented florescent beams during the night. I sprinkled some wild flower seeds about, just so I don't have to look at mud for the next few months.

Now is the time to get your soil tested in order to **KNOW** for sure if anything extra is needed to tweak the PH up or down, to add nitrogen, or to reduce potassium build up. Continue to compost. Even small holes 3' deep can make a difference: egg shells, coffee grounds, shrimp tails, potato and orange peels, as well as grass clippings and leaves encourage vital micro-organisms-- an ample panoply of nutrients. Deborah has released beneficial nematodes to combat nasty spotted snake millipedes in her dirt. I already sent off my first two tuber orders and arranged one swap, so I am looking forward to seeing some new floral faces in the Dell this season.

Yours in Dirt,
Deborah



Dahlia Society of California, Inc., San Francisco, CA -- Copyrighted

Originally Organized
In 1917
In San Francisco

the Dahlia was adopted as the
Official Flower of San Francisco
on October 4, 1926
by its Board of Supervisors

Editor: Deborah Dietz
Page layout: Mike Willmarth
Snail mail: Pat Hunter
Photo credits: Carter, Darmstad, Dichbarn, Dietz,
Holmes, Marr, Pendergast, Vacation, Woodson



[Click here for past issues of the DSC newsletter](#)

Like what you see? Visit the DSC for even more dahlia information. And if you are not a DSC member yet be sure to join.

sfdahlias.org