



**NEXT MEETING:** February 12, @ 7:30 time @ 9th and Lincoln

**PROGRAM:** John Caddell will show us how to take better photos of our favorite dahlias. Who will bring goodies to share?



**DIGOUT 2013:**

With San Francisco receiving over 130% of its annual rain in December, we were so fortunate to have 2 clear, sunny days for our annual exhumation and processing ritual. Thursday, Mike, Erik and Deborah made sure there were tuber clumps ready to go by 8 am Sat. morning. Craig set up his water station, manning it unstintingly until 3 in the afternoon. When someone asked him if he'd cleaned clumps the whole time without a break, he laughed, "It's ok. I'm married." Tinnee and Donna strung lights over the Label Table. John organized the Bleach Bench again this year and scientifically measured out 8% Clorox solutions into each container. Erik and Wayne brought tables over from the Conservatory, as the Gardeners had "cleaned house" jettisoning some of our familiar ping pong tables and rickety chairs. Nicolas leapt into the fray transporting tubers up from the Dell to the Court-



yard. Five year old Jack arrived ready to join his hero in the traces, arriving with his own wheelbarrow. How gently Nick mentored his schlepping apprentice! Sue took charge of lifting marked tubers in Deborah's section; Roger and John G. made great inroads on the gopher basket dahlias on the hillside. Over 30 volunteers from One Brick painstakingly ripped out the weed infestation that thrived in our wet weather, leaving things Zen raked. Wow! Meanwhile the Dingwall family arrived with Scot and Ron giving dividing lessons while Joann and Natalie tutored at the Label Table. Mike demoed his Multi tool –a dividing sensation while John utilized a razor blade in a surgical clamp—very effective! Supervisor Charlie and Guillermo zoomed up a

truck full of tubers and carried them in. We so appreciate the generosity and co-operation of the park gardeners for allowing and abetting our annual mayhem. On Sunday families from Marin Country Day aimed their youthful energy to further weed and tidy up.





### AN ARMY MARCHES ON ITS STOMACH:

Work slacked off when Orlando arrived with 11 pizzas, complimented by Deborah's great salad, and the Mani's wonderful crock pot full of hot chili. Scott's sheet of homemade peanut brittle rewarded many. Down thirsty gullets went Erik's various sodas and waters. Paula's banana bread disappeared too fast. Which blessed person brought the whole box of See's Candies? MMMM.... Thanks to whoever donated the large pasta salad, too.



## REMEMBERING MONTEREY:

How better to assuage the mud months than to review the Monterey Show in Soquel last August. Jan Palia constructed magnificent arrangements! Kristine cleaned up the first three categories, AA, A and B: AC Dark Horse, Kenora Jubilee and April Dawn. Peg nabbed Best Peony with Deidra while Tinne scored with Best O, Midnight Star. DJ had Best small seedling, as well as Best Vernon Rose and Almand Introduction. Team Dietz hit the head table with both x1 and x3 Flower of the year, Mexico along with Best New Intro, Marilyn Woodward. Super Shot, Barry Hart, displayed the best photo. Congrats to our Lou P for highest scoring seedling, Eden Predator, and best Large in show, Eden Talos.



## PAEN TO DAHLIAS:

In response to a bouquet of late blooming dahlias, Judd recently sent this florid thank you note. "If it's a murder of crows, is it an explosion of dahlias? Surely 'bouquet' is too pedestrian for that riot vased on my kitchen table yelling primal screams of color while bold petals pirouette their passionate filaments about with wanton disregard for the peace and calm of morning coffee.

They blaze and blush and bleed their primaries with effortless grace. Drab me is, simply, swept away. Thanks." No wonder we have so much fun giving dahlias away; they assail the senses and flabbergast our friends.



**NEW, COOL, OR BOTH:**

The Masurats always exhibit wonderful things: Ivonetti—perfect form 6009 , Tahoma Alicia 6105, and a shimmering Marilyn M, 3204. Iris’s Alberta Sunset 7012, caught lots of ah’s. Morton’s Holly Hill Pinkie, a rare mini fim, beguiled. Much coveted was Lou P’s bi-stellar seedling. Kevin and Karen displayed x5 dandy Bernadette Castros, 4004. Their new introduction, Anne Hyde proved easy to match for multiples. K&K’s unnamed second year dazzled. Deborah’s Scott’s RW demonstrated outstanding cactus form. Kristine reminded us again about the crisp id form of Mingus Toni and the wonderful color combination of Granny Normans.



Ivonetti - 6009



Tahoma Alicia - 6105



Marilyn



Iris's Alberta Sunset



Morton's Holly Hill Pinkie



Bi-stellar seedling



Bernadette Castro



Anne Hyde



2nd year dazzler



Scott's RW



Granny Norman



Clearview Avia



Clearview Lila

### LIVING MANDALAS:

Mike and Martha recently retreated to a monastery in Nepal where the temperatures ranged from low 40's to pleasant 60's. Each day practitioners entered through an isle of A and AA dahlias, lovely mandalas of sanity, keeping them rooted in the now and Zen.



### GARDEN MEMORIES:

To brighten the mud months, check out how sumptuous Pat's backyard looked in October.



### GREENBOX REPAIRS:

Orlando operated on our vandalized green box to keep it dry through the winter. His grandchildren met their grand handyman at the Dell and young Claire worked so diligently with Valeria that she earned her own compost bucket.



### DUES DUE:

Time to renew your DSC dues. Either download our membership form or fill one out at our meeting.

[DCS Membership form](#)

### PSW CONFERENCE:

We're looking forward to seeing you at the PSWDC at the Marina Inn February 16th & 17th. Meet bloomerati, discuss dahlia aesthetics, bargain for tuber trades, renew old acquaintances. (Note the registration deadline is February 8th.)

[PSWDC Registrtrion form](#)

## JUST JUMPING WITH JANUARY . . .

If you are leaving dahlias in your well-drained garden, put some big 5-10 gallon buckets over the top of them. These provide some respite from the rain, act as mini greenhouses, and thwart the growth of weeds. Make sure they're labeled. Mulch! Grass clippings, leaves, compost, or bags of chicken manure can be strewn about. Bob Papp tells me that he bought a leaf sucker with a built in mascerator; as it collects leaves, it chews them up and blows them into a bag over his shoulder. At first his neighbors loved him as he cleared leaves from his yard, his street, the storm drains, and even his neighbors' yards. Bob's worms gorged down; his garden lolled in deep mulch. Then another neighbor purchased a similar leaf sucker. Then another neighbor. Whoever got up earlier sucked up the latest leaves. Ultimately a Yalta Summit Meeting had to be empaneled to partition the neighborhood and establish areas of influence and rules for "neighborly" leaf removal. Dr. Winch in Forest Knowles used to have an agreement with several yard maintenance men to accept dumps of grass clippings. Mike Schelp goes straight to the source and has a dump truck load of glorious top soil dumped directly at his milk crate farm. Secondly: WEED! Every weed you nail now, prevents hundreds of invasive weeds from propagating later. Truly. Do it now! Keep it up. You'll be grateful to yourself. Thirdly, time to set up your make-shift greenhouse—what we affectionately call the SuzyBake Oven contraptions. Follow this link to Tinnee's expert advice. For less than \$100 you can build a remarkable set up to germinate tubers and make your own cuttings. Lou P has already set up his magic production greenhouse where he will produce over 1000 cuttings of HOT varieties for our April Tuber sale. Fourthly, indulge in "dahlia porn;" check out the various on-line dahlia catalogs and order some new cultivars. If you have a greenhouse set-up, order for earliest shipping; if not, try to have them arrive by mid-March so you can germinate them inside. The whole idea is that the larger the plant is by the time you put it in your garden in April, the sooner you'll have flowers. We had dahlias blooming at the Dell by the end of May. Lastly, use the mud months to cruise the thrift shops for cool containers. The Salvation Army at 4th and Geary throws great sales. Remember, short and heavy are your major priorities, since leaves must show over the top of the vase and dahlias can be prodigiously top heavy. I saw 3 glass votive candle holders for 99 cents—such a deal!

## . . . and FEBRUARY FRUITIAN



I let the Dell tubers from digOut dry on their black flats for 5 days before bagging them in plastic bags by name in a combination of vermiculite and peat moss. I store them in my garage where it's dry and cool but not cold. I also just sent in orders to Aztec and Corralitos Dahlias for some snazzy new varieties. Consider purchasing something new and fun both for your own delight and for the pleasure of those around you. Time to set up your greenhouse, whether it's a freestanding structure in your backyard, a book shelf Suzy Bake Oven affair in your garage, or a cold frame lean-to on your warmest side of the house. I have already started my tubers in milk cartons and stashed them in the warmest part of my house, the loft, for germination. Dick Meyers

germinates next to his water heater; Paula puts hers in plastic bags on the highest shelf of her warmest closet. I use a loose potting mix of approximately 1/3 sand, 1/3 perlite or vermiculite and 1/3 soil. In general, tubers germinate in 62-65 degrees, meaning their eyes bulge up and produce green sprouts. **DO NOT WATER UNTIL YOU SEE GREEN SPROUTS!** Lou P. and his helpers have over a hundred hot varieties on the cutting bench already. Thanks to the Schelps, Roland Verrone and Mike Riorden for donating tantalizing new cultivars whose scions you'll see at our Tuber Sale April 20th. WEED! The more you weed now, the less overwhelmed you'll be at planting time. Paula in Tiburon combats her heavy clay soil by "feeding" it; each time she pulls out a 5 gallon dahlia container, she fills the remaining hole with leaves, kitchen scraps and compost. Each year her holes get deeper, wider, and easier to dig, and yield better blooms. How can you add tilth to your soil? Remember, chicken manure needs at

least 6 weeks to “cool” down before planting. Consider a cover crop like sweet peas or hairy vetch. These nab nitrogen from the air and fix it in the soil for your dahlias to consume in the summer time. If you just want to cover the muddy spot, sprinkle some wild flower seeds. They’ll be gay and cheery until you want to plant dahlias again. Call around to see if you can help others dig out their clumps and help divide them. These processes are always more fun done with company.

Yours in Dirt,  
*Deborah*

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Originally Organized  
In 1917  
In San Francisco

the Dahlia was adopted as the  
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on October 4, 1926  
by its Board of Supervisors

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Wishing you had access to the past 12 months of dahlia doings? [Click here for past newsletters](#)



More Denizens  
of the Dig Out

