



NEXT MEETING: June 11 @ 7:30 @ 9th and Lincoln

Program: John Mani will show how to make water conserving dahlia pots and answer any questions about the use of shade cloth.



CLAUQUE OF CLAPPERS:

Not only did Erik bring a curiosity called a “carousel,” something of an antique in this Power Point age, but he also imported a huge audience. They loved his vintage photos of the Dell ringed with Model T’s. Did you know that at SFO airport, our Babylon By the Bay proudly displays its plaque with the official city flower, the dahlia, alongside the plaques of our sister cities and their official flowers? Erik’s lecture finished with a rousing discussion of best pest management strategies, and green vs. more lethal means of depredation. Deborah favors Hoist for mildew control; it’s available from Romeo’s in Half Moon Bay. At \$100 for 4 packets, it’s pricey; but she suggested that 4 growers go in together (2 people are already interested, so let Deborah know).



AND THE SALE GOES ON:

Devorah brought in almost 100 gorgeous cuttings coming late from the greenhouse including Rolf, Stillwater Brilliant, Harvey Koop, Nick Sr., Holly Hill Tigress, Tahoma Sarah B, Clearview Tammy and Chimacum Julia. Wow! Deborah brought in several milk cartons full with Wildwood Marie, Carmen Bunky, Pennhill Watermellon, and Aitara Rufus. Tony got very creative: he bagged sprouted tubers and printed a photo along with the ADS classification of each. He offered wonderful varieties like Fern Irene, Bode, Camano Messenger, Cheyenne, Sorbet, Neon Splendor, Tahoma Red Tide and Sonic Bloom. He writes, “Next year I’ll start them all earlier in milk cartons.” Great!

GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS:



Along with her hundred cuttings, Devorah shared a basket of Meyer lemons. Thanks to Marie for her chocolate gram cookies, to Bill for his wonderful cake, to Erik for his sugar free candies, and to the other generous contributors who teased our palates.



LAST CHANCE PUBLIC DAHLIA SALE:

DSC will sell dahlia plants on June 8 at the Hall of Flowers from 10am until 3 pm. Let Deborah know if you can help out in the morning selling and explaining to the public best planting practices (415 816 2118).

DAHLIAS IN SCIENCE:

Science Magazine, Nov. 2012, featured a section “The Secret of the Black Dahlia.” “A team of researchers in Austria has turned the eye of science on what makes a dahlia black. The team collected 14 varieties of black dahlia—with names such as Black Barbara, Arabian Night, Karma Choc and Tisa—and five with tamer colors, then extensively analyzed their petals. They measured the activity of enzymes that make pigments, investigated gene expression, and measured the pigments themselves. Their conclusion: the black color comes from high levels of anthocyanins, the pigments that—a lower levels—also give orange and red dahlias their colors.” Ultimately the team conjectures that so called “black dahlias” raise their anthocyanin levels by blocking the flavone pathway. If they can figure out how to do this, we might see more black varieties in the future.

CORRALITOS FLASHBACK:

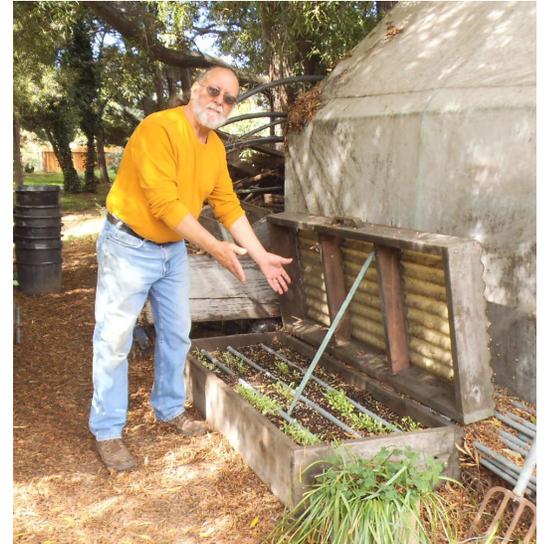
At the end of May Orlando and I stopped by Corralitos Gardens to pick up orders for 4 San Franciscans. Kevin gave us a guided tour of his 3 greenhouses. In the first one, mother plants and pot roots germinate in heated sand. In the second greenhouse, new cuttings get misted regularly. In the third greenhouse, the plants are hardened off and await shipping all over the United States. Wow! What an operation. Kevin says the slow ones are always the ones he has the most orders for. Of course.



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Recently Bob Papp and Deborah toured four of our prominent Bay Area growers to learn the secrets of their propagation techniques.

MORTON'S MENAGERIE: Piled to the ceiling, each of John Morton's tubers has its own box in an alphabetical filing system in the tuber garage. John has been going strong on his cutting and seedling program since New Years. He makes cuttings from pot roots, clumps, and late season potted plants. In his greenhouse he implements lights and misting. Then he crams his 4"x4" cartons into flats and hardens them off in full sun. He sows his seeds in a cold frame and then transplants them to his large plot all under shade cloth against the bright San Leandro sun. Up in the joints of his canopy, we discovered an inhabited humming bird nest! The German Shepard and clucking hens watched as we discovered wonderful cuttings: Creekside Volcano, Mexico, Valley Porcupine, LoBlush, L.A.T.E., and some new Tahoma varieties.



Seedling cold frame condo



Tracking tubera

KEN'S CLUBHOUSE: Ken Masurat works his magic in a large greenhouse with many many shelves. His cuttings go immediately into oasis wedges no lower than 2" under lights. As the wee plants grow,

Ken raises the lights to accommodate their new heights. Ken also starts lots of different tomatoes, peppers, and squashes. Who knew that Ken sells different blends of his home grown chilies from mild to wild!



A cutting he will go

ALL OVER HALF MOON BAY: Mike Schelp starts over 1000 tubers in shallow plastic strawberry containers on a monstrous rack in his garage 1000 feet from the ocean. Too many sprout too fast forcing him to juggle many different aspects of his operation at one time. He feels almost overwhelmed. Upon germination, he transfers his dahlias to a commercial greenhouse next door to orchid and carnivorous plant purveyors. Finally he transfers his new plants to 3 gallon pots or straight to his above ground milk crates out in the field next to the horse arena and giant pumpkin patch where he has to urge the chickens off his planted boxes. Mike demonstrated how simple his “lifting” procedure is with milk crates. After unfolding a tarp in front of the crate, he kneels down. Then he turns the crate on its side and lets some dirt fall out until the tuber clump is exposed. He gently extricates the tuber mass and turns the crate right side up again. Then he dumps the remaining soil back in the crate. Done. Simple. No shovel. No digging. So eminently civilized. Just tipping and lifting. Mike generously shared treasures like Black Monarch, Vista Minnie, AC Dark Horse, Mingus Julie, Rolf, and Prometheus.



Strawberry box fields forever



The future of growing dahlias? - no digging required

PUPP TENTS: Roger Pupp’s greenhouses drape waterproof cloth over sturdy metal frames. “Easy to put up and take down, “ Roger testifies. Starting from tubers (except the cuttings he buys from Corralitos), Roger grows in 4 gallon pots which he slips in specially prepared holes in his terraces. When dahlia season is over, he replaces the pots with others full of daffodils, gladioli, and hyacinths. Roger shared Nick Sr.s, Wynn’s Zazzel, Wanda’s Auroa, Bryn Terfel, and Sas-safras. Bob says he bagged the Big ones on this Dahlia Safari!



Roger shows off his happy campers

BASKET MAKING 101:

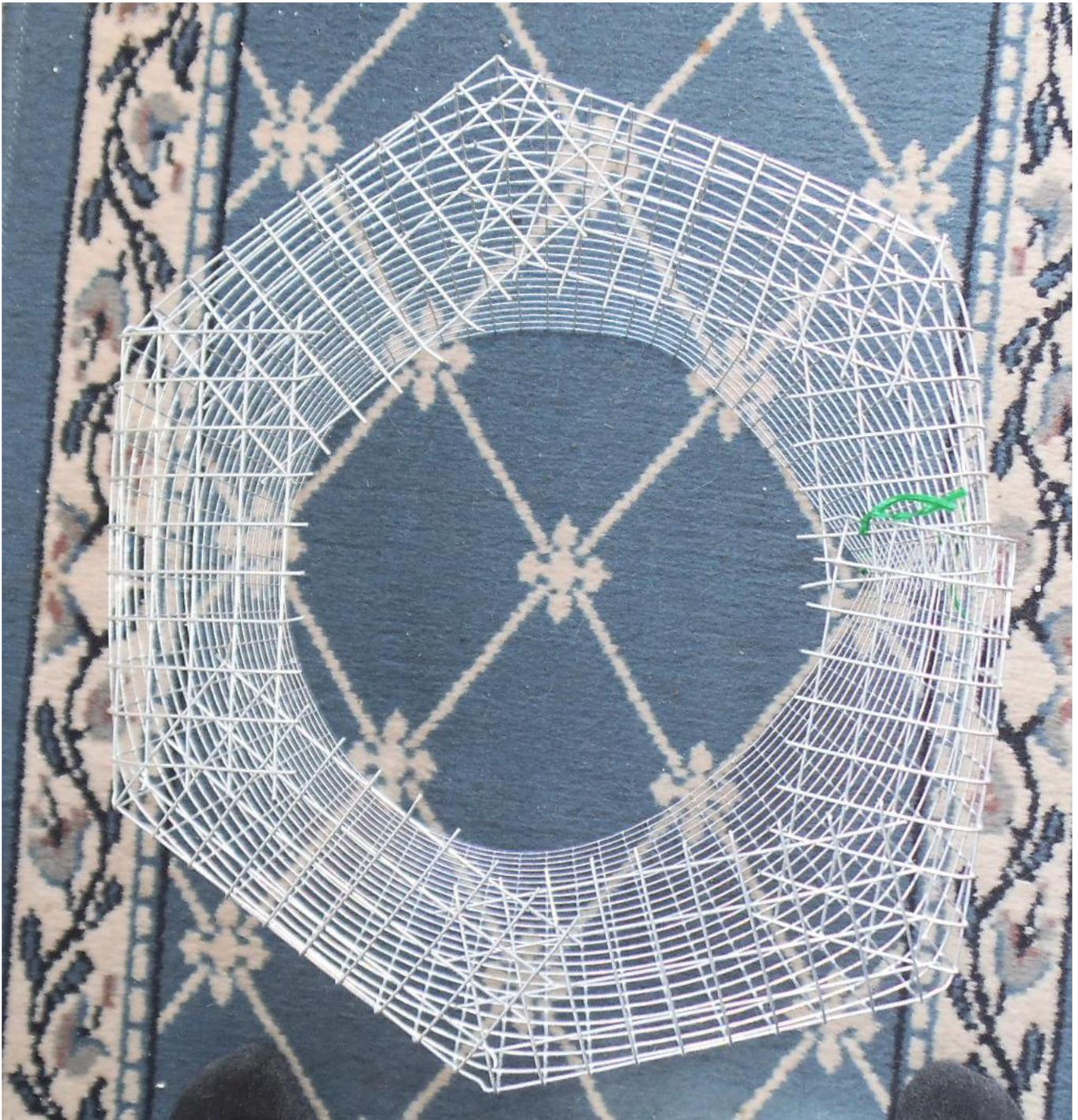
Valeria and Sue came to a hands-on seminar at the Maus Haus to make gopher cages following Tinnee's pattern. Starting with 48" wide hardware cloth, and knowing that Pi (approx. 3.14) times diameter = circumference, the Hillside girls worked out dimensions for 10-16" wide baskets. After cutting strips 12" wide, they snipped slits like gladiator skirts around the bottom and turned them inwards. (see picture on the next page) To secure their cylinders, they used twisty ties; Tinnee used zip ties. They also cut square pieces slightly larger than the bottom to go underneath each cage. Early on, they were glad to have heavy gloves and major wire cutters; nevertheless, they gave blood in their quest for impregnable baskets.



On the hillside, Tony and Vince helped Sue and Valeria dig big holes, 1" less deep than the basket, so 1" sits above ground. Into this void goes first the bottom square mesh followed by the basket with its flanges turned inwards.

Next, they filled the cages halfway full of soil. Only then did they add fertilizer, Bayers, and their dahlia plant. They filled with as much dirt as the plant warranted, knowing that as their dahlia grows, they will continue to fill up the basket. Check out the hillside to see for yourself how inconspicuous but EFFEC-TIVE their beautiful cages are!





Basket turned upside down showing the bottom flaps folded inwards. A square piece slightly larger than the bottom of the cage will be placed in the bottom of the hole before the cage is lowered into the hole.

JUNE IS BUSTING OUT ALL OVER:

I love seeing the first blooms of the year! In the Dell, Elvira flourishes gay pink blossoms. Rolf blooms big by mid-May! On the hillside Jessica already greets the public. Lou's Weston Pirate claims first bloom in his section. There are buds everywhere! Remember prophylaxis works more effectively than chasing problems. Now is the time to spray your plants if they are more than 3 weeks old. Use a fungicide, an insecticide and a foliar fertilizer. I like systemic HOIST as a fungicide. Some people add liquid Bayer's 3 in 1. I prefer Spinosad for a slightly greener insecticide. Captain Jack is also green. Check out a hydroponics store for great water soluble fertilizers. Compost tea is ideal. In my gallon sprayer, I add a table spoon of liquid Ivory Soap to act as a surfactant; it helps your droplets stick to your plants. Remember:



Brick o' roots ready for planting

dahlias like to be very wet and then very dry.

Let them tell you when

they want more water. When they slightly droop, that's when you want to give them more water. To pinch or not to pinch out? I like to wait until I see the first bud. Then I take it, its side buds and its first pair of leaves off. Others wait until they have 5 leaf pairs and pinch off the top set. Either way, you send important energy and resources back into the roots and plants so the second level laterals will be significantly stronger and not crotch bound. (Horror!) Recheck your xl spread sheet for "holes" in your collection. Buy the missing items at our June meeting sale or our June public sale. When planting my milk carton dahlias, I let them get a couple days dry so that when I tear open the carton, I have a lovely brick of roots perfect for dropping in a waiting hole.



Rolf

Yours in Dirt,
Deborah

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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
Photo credits: Dietz, Harris

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