



NEXT MEETING: February 10 @ 7:30 @ 9th and Lincoln

Program: Presentation by the Worm Lady of San Mateo, Alene Weber. She will discuss vermicomposting and its benefits for our soil and our plants and how to set up a system in your kitchen, garage, back porch or just about anywhere. The membership raffle for three gift certificates to our tuber sale will be held. Baker Bill has donated a bunch of vases for other lucky winners. You need NOT be present for the tuber vouchers but you MUST be present to win vases. Who will bring Valentine's delights?

PRETTY AS THEIR PICTURES

Not only did Frank bring us the CD of ADS's 2015 New Introductions, he also printed out the 3 pages of data about each photo. Soooooo many beautiful new dahlias! This time Deborah figured out how to pause and even go back to previous slides so we could appreciate adequately our favorites. Devi and Pat announced that they had already purchased several of these stunners before they were sold out by Christmas. A few that elicited gasps from the audience included the Boley's Suncatcher, B LC var y/r—quite the frothy explosion. Chris Dix won the Dudley award for his Olivia Maureen, BB LC W. The white/purple swirl of River's Purple Pinwheel caught stellar fanciers' eyes. Ice cream coned quills made Iler's Ember MB y a stunning member of a tough category only to be challenged by the Kennedy's Hollyhill Hot Shot, MB bi rd/y. Several NX had people asking what was so novel about them? The only AA was Greenway's AC Big Johnson, a bruiser of an AA SC LB y/or. Frank wondered if its name hinted at "double entendre?" Hmmmmm. We all cheered for KA's Cloud, the billowy A ID w from Kristine Albrecht which won both the Lynn Dudley AND the Derrill Hart awards.



Sandia Suncatcher



Olivia Maureen



Hollyhill Hotshot



River's Purple Pinwheel



Marla O



Yildiz Park



Hollyhill Medusoid



Hapet Pearl



Ember

GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS

Devi reported that she gets her soil evaluated at the University of Massachusetts for \$15—data available on line. They send her a detailed evaluation and suggestions for improvement. Bill asked about Preem, a preemergent plant killer that prevents seeds from germinating thus keeping down the weed situation. Deborah allowed as how several preeminent growers around the country still use RoundUp to clear large sections of dahlia patches before planting. However, she warned, RoundUp will also kill many of the beneficial micro-organisms in the soil. Devi described “sheet mulch:” she lays down cardboard on her soil, covered with burlap. Since no light gets to the underneath, nothing grows; the cardboard over time “is great for the worms.” This year Devi’s trying weed cloth.

Our soil sojourn was accompanied by Pat’s exquisite Ghirardelli chocolate squares and a crème sherry wine cake ala Baker Bill. Scott donated crunchy cookies and John and Annette brought wrapped English biscuits. Thank you all for your delicious generosity.

DIG OUT 2015

Blessed with shirtsleeve sunshine, Erik and Deborah supervised a revised DigOut. Because the Golden Gate Bridge was closed to erect the barrier, we exhorted Marinites to stay home. Because Sue and Valeria, Pat and Tinnee and Lou had all extricated their tubers already, there were very few remaining to process. John Dale, in his full haz-mat regalia, again manned the abbreviated bleach bench. A few scribes rode the label table. Erik demonstrated dividing. Carol, her daughter Ana, and Cathy pulled all Deborah’s stakes and squeezed tinfoil over the left-in clump stalks to prevent rain from dripping down and rotting crowns.

Tony and Will dug massive compost pits. On Sunday wonderful volunteers from One Brick meticulously pulled weeds, sifted them to remove dirt, and then spaded up Pat and Lou’s areas of the teardrop.

Finally they raked the Hillside and the Valley to Zen perfection.



Thank you to ALL who helped out: your labor-- and even more you great attitudes-- made for two productive and delightful days!



In Memorium: Steve Nowotarski



With great difficulty and deep sadness, ADS President Don Dramstad announced the passing of Steve Nowotarski on January 13, 2015, in New York City. Steve was a giant in the gardening world and the American Dahlia Society in particular. He recognized many years ago that the dahlia world was larger than just exhibiting dahlias at shows. Hybridizers from around the world would send their new creations to Steve to test them for quality. Being a fierce competitor with dahlias helped to make him a top rate judge.

Steve combined the skills of a traditional grower, exhibitor and hybridizer, with a visionary's commitment to the development of the dahlia as a popular flower appealing to the general gardening public. He was a proponent of organic, chemical-free gardening and wrote extensively and persuasively under the sobriquet, Joe Worm. Steve also saw the value of dahlias as a container and bedding flower, and produced a how-to video that had wide circulation. His work at the Callahan Dahlia Garden at Planting Fields in Long Island, New York introduced the dahlia to thousands of new growers. He produced an attractive brochure for the new grower and an e-newsletter to supplement the ADS website. In 2013, Steve became the recipient of the ADS Gold Medal, the Society's highest award. He had been deeply involved in the planning of the ADS Centennial Show to be held in September 2015, hosted by his Mid-Island Dahlia Society.

AVIAN ADORATION

I watched a pair of ravens at the Dell when I went to dig up a couple clumps. One sat on the edge of a black pot full of rain water and chugged a huge slurp down. The other sleek black bird raised its open beak and received the stream of water with a satisfied gurgle. I wondered whether we had courtship or just a fat, fledged offspring wanting a little more babying before growing up. Later another pair of ravens shot down out of the sky landing five feet away from me. At first I thought they were hoping to find worms from the holes I had dug. Instead, one attacked a desiccated clump and nabbed its aluminum foil cap. It flumped over to its mate and presented this shiny gewgaw. The two had quite a conversation about this marvel. Whilst they contemplated finding the latest Kohinoor Diamond mine, I worried that if word reached the larger raven community, my clumps would soon lose their protective condoms. C'est l'amour; C'est la guerre!

HALFMOON BAY DUMP OUT

Mike Shelp does not have to dig out his dahlias; rather he spreads out a tarp and tips his plastic milk crate over to scoop out the jewels in the center. Mike and Martha generously donated two of all his A and AA's to our cutting bench and another 22 clumps for Deborah to truck home and divide on her sunny deck. Look for his AC Abbey, Aitara Rufus, Elsie Houston, Wyn's Suncatcher, and Debora Renee. BTW, Mike's little piece of paradise had 27 dahlias BLOOMING the second week in January.



PSW CONFERENCE

Last reminder about the PSW conference down in San Diego. [Here is a link to the information.](#)

FUSSING THROUGH FEBRUARY

Have you set up a bookcase greenhouse yet? All you need is a light and a clear plastic wrap to keep the humidity in. Try sprouting a couple tubers and making your own cuttings. Devorah, Lou, Pat, and Corralitos use sterile oasis plugs to pop their sprouts into; I just plant mine in 2"x2" pots in soil lightened with a little perlite or vermiculite. Once I have wetted mine down, I just spritz them periodically with a super dilute mixture of fungicide/insecticide/fertilizer. **SUPER DILUTE.** In fact, just to protect myself from my lavish feeding tendencies, I make up a pint bottle of super dilute solution and then put a couple teaspoons of this already dilute solution into another quart sized spritzer bottle and fill it up with water. Ask around and you will hear horror stories of generous growers who over fertilized their little dahlias and woke up to black sludge; massive collapsed death. Grim.



Did you save seeds? Now is the time to pop your seeds between two wet paper towels and put them under a light source. Some people put them on heating pads, but beware! Heating pads left unattended can dry up your newly emerged sprouts. Gently transfer your sprouts to a small 2x2 or 4x4 pot and keep under lights.



CHECK YOUR TUBERS!! Remove any rotten ones immediately. Erik's trick to soak up the excess moisture is to add clumping kitty litter. It's amazing how well this works. If any of your tubers have sprouted, pot them up in milk cartons or gallon pots and put under lights, into a cold frame, or on the shelf of your warmest window. I began several tubers in milk cartons in my loft in January; now I have begun taking cuttings from some of them for our Tuber Sale April 18. Note in the photo how this dahlia has already sent two shoots up on either side of where I took the cutting.

Special thanks to all the wonderful baristas at Martha Brothers Coffee who have patiently saved me quart-sized milk cartons! And to Baker Bill, Lene, and Bonnie who have saved me half-gallon cartons. (You'll see them full of dahlias at our tuber sale.)

Have you added compost to your dahlia patch? You can always dig a column 3' deep and only 6-8" across and add kitchen rubbish like egg shells, potato/carrot peelings, coffee grounds and tea bags. Be sure to put a heavy something over the top of the column to keep critters out. Paula, constantly enriching her stone-dense clay soil, keeps enlarging the hole when she digs out her tuber clumps. Then she fills it up with leaves and kitchen scraps all winter long. Each year she has bigger, better, and brighter dahlias.



Did you take pix at our DigOut or holiday party? Please send them to me at dahlia.dietz@gmail.com so they can be shared with your fellow DSCers.

Do you have a tip or a good dahlia story? Send it to me for our newsletter.

Do you have questions about the mud months? Let me know so I can try to get some answers for everyone.

Yours in Dirt,

Deborah

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Surfing the pit pile

[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. sfdahlia.org

