



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

Program: Famed Stanford botanist, Virginia Walbot, will update us on her latest research into dahlia color and response to various environmental stimuli. Last chance to donate or buy extra tubers or plants. Deborah leads a hands-on seminar at Dell at 6:15 pm to practice disbudding, pinching out and dead-heading. Who will bring treats for hungry dahlianeers?

DAHLIAS: TAXONIMY, HISTORY, GLORY

The internet has its TED talks; DSC has its ERIK talk. Dr. Gaensler reprised his slide show following a year of dahlia growing. Erik showed how dahlias feature in the official SF seal presented to Sister Cities around the world, in keeping with the dahlia being the official flower of San Francisco since 1926. Because we advertised Erik's talk at our tuber sale, we enjoyed many new guests. Erik reminded the crowd that the number of flowers per dahlia plant is directly inverse to the flowers' size; an AA will yield a few humongous blooms, but an anemone, orchette, ms, or single will give you hundreds of jaunty flowers. Erik compared our annual DigOut to an Amish barn raising "only without the Amish and without the barn." Afterwards, Erik answered many individual's questions.



GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS

Thanks to Ron and Joann for AGAIN hauling in boxes of fresh lemons in addition to their Peanut butter cookies. To Devi, Pat and Tinnee for bringing in the latest greenhouse debouchment including Santa Claus, Jane, Diva, Bloomquist Jeff, Lakeview Glow and AC Rooster complete with photos. Deborah's milk cartooned options included Boogie Woogie, CV Magic, Vista Minnie, Arabian Nights and Red Velvet. Chris Dix surprised us with a quick visit to deliver his cuttings of Leslie Renee and Olivia, the Derrill Hart winner. John Dale let us munch on tortilla chips; Gino and Leo brought peanut butter and chocolate chip cookies respectively. Lola nailed us with brownie caramel brittle. John and Annette served us petite palmiers, while ultra-craftswoman, Jenna, designed skewers of strawberries and blueberries. Very artistic and yummy. Thank you so much to so many people.



Leslie Renee



Boogie Woogie



Arabian Night

FRIDGID FUSSING AT DELL

Tinnee and Craig sunk over sixty gopher cages on the hillside. Despite the cold weather, Billy donned a snazzy new apron, hat and gloves to plant a couple dozen dahlias for Deborah, thereby learning her "secret sauce" components that she puts into her holes. Alexis disbudded, pinched out and staked. In colorful flower printed tights Alexis helped Deborah dig up and divide a couple sophomore plants that had too many stems emerging. Using the ADS Classification Book (the dahlia Bible), Billy and Alexis practiced identifying blooming dahlias. Together they keyed out Jac's Kelly in Tin's section, Apopa Sky in Deborah's territory, Esmeralda in Lou's and a magnificent Kenora Jubilee shining on Sue and Valeria's hillside.



Apopa Sky



Kenora Jubilee

NO PLACE LIKE DOME

Recently Deborah (me) traveled to SoCal to tour 3 institutions, 2 private estates, 2 home gardens and a county fair. At the Long Beach VA, Bob Papp is developing a dahlia garden that is wheelchair accessible so the Vets can experience the joys of dahlia growing, too. He found that greenhouses get too warm for germinated dahlias given the SoCal heat, so he transferred them to covered but open to the air spaces. Amongst the bulls, pigs and chickens, Bob grows a dahlia display garden at the Orange County Fairgrounds.



To protect the emerging sprouts still below surface level, Bob uses plastic cups with the bottoms cut off. Driving through Bob's neighborhood, you don't have to guess which is his; right now it looks like he has a thriving cup farm. Because of the continuing drought, Bob has replaced several raised rows with wicking beds— each with an underground cachement for water. He says even during hot spells, he has to water only every 13-14 days. Bob read about people growing potatoes in hay bales. He figures that potato tubers are similar enough to dahlia tubers. As



the tops of the bales decompose, he scrapes out pockets, fills them with soil and plants dahlias: instant raised beds. Jon Dietz, my brother, sells geodesic domes (sonostarhub.com). He covered his 26' diameter backyard dome with a parachute and built shelves all around the edge; then he hung an 8' diameter "sphere of Damoscles" in the center, bedizened with bromeliads, fuchsias, and Spanish moss. Inside almost 70 dahlias bloom. Cross-pollination occurs in brains and hearts as well as stamens and pistols.





JUMPIN' OUT JUNE

Wow. Things are really blooming up already. By mid-May the Wardens already had ten sizable dahlias blooming. Both Phil and Pat say Corralitos cuttings have really thrived this year. Great start to the season. After three weeks in the ground, I usually give my charges their first sprayed cocktail consisting of a fungicide, an insecticide and some water soluble fertilizer. I throw in a dollop of kelp and fish emulsion with a few trace elements. Phil uses amazing supplements from the SF “marijuana store”—the hydroponics retail shop that stocks amazingly effective liquid concoctions. He notes that most customers arrive with a wad of cash and know what they need.

Before plants get 18” high, Bob lays a netting of hortanova parallel to the ground. He lays a second level at 40” and even a third level if necessary later in the season. Check out the photo. His dahlias grow through this. He likes better than staking because there are no bars to distort the blooms leaning against them. When planting, I add a teaspoon of mycorrhizomes to each of my holes about 3” underground. Supposedly this beneficial fungus builds net between all ones plants whereby they can glean nutrients from farther away and also “warn” each other about pests???? Allen Haas and Kristine Albrecht swear by microrhysomes. We’ll see how this year goes.



In June ones normal problems include ants, earwigs, snails, slugs, caterpillars and gophers. Diatomaceous earth around the stalk of each dahlia thwarts ants from establishing aphid dairies. Sluggo Plus deters the slimy critters without endangering your young children or greedy dogs. Captain Jack’s Deadbug, a Green spinosad, will keep insects off your leaves. Serenade if used every two weeks RELIGIOUSLY, will obviate mildew. Stylet oil eliminates mildew, too. Prophylactic treatment before you ever see the powdery stuff, is the best prevention for mildew whatever you use. More lethal mildew treatments include Monterey Fungi Fighter and Hoist, found at Romeo’s in Half Moon Bay.

Many people pinch out their dahlias when they have achieved four sets of leaves; I usually wait until I see the beginnings of a bud appear. Find the terminal bud, its two side buds and the two leaves that go with them; cut below this bunch. This not only prevents wasting a crummy crotch-bound first bloom, but pinching also concentrates the energy and growth back into the incipient roots. Establish a good dahlia plant and it will bloom in San Francisco through Thanksgiving. I have been disbudding like crazy already at the Dell. Find your terminal or main bud; remove any other buds between it and the first SET of leaves—this could be 1-3 too many buds. Thus, your primary bud will get all the energy otherwise divided amongst the four buds; likewise the stem will be stronger and longer. When you deadhead, cut down to new growth. If you don’t, you will end up with brown sticks in the garden by the end of August or beginning of September. If you’re not sure about pinching out, disbudding or deadheading, come to the hands-on clinic at the Dell at 6:15 before our next meeting.

Do you have a worm bin? Are you making worm tea? Great organic gardeners swear by spraying their dahlias with this “live” elixir. Devorah, Mike Schelp and John Morton swear by worm tea.

Label your dahlia plants. I use venetian blind slats. Lou used to cut up Clorox and kitty litter plastic containers and paste printed labels on them. Sue and Valeria laminate their printed labels and use pushpins to attach to the stakes. ALSO—in addition—make a dahlia map so you know where and what your bushes are just in case something happens to your stakes. Lastly, make an XL spread sheet, what Tinnee calls the Mistress (not master) list. I put the cultivar names down the left side and then have columns across the top for garden position, form, size, color, ADS number and source. Printed out, this becomes my show cheat sheet; at one glance I have everything I need to fill out entry cards.

Careful with your watering. Dahlias like to be very wet and then very dry. Wait until your dahlias “tell” you they need water. They will slightly wilt, sag, and look a bit sad. Then give them a full draught. Post your first blooming dahlia pix on FaceBook at the Dahlia Society of California page.

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: Bykova, D. Dietz, J. Dietz, Papp, Warden

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