



**NEXT MEETING:** 13 March. Program: Getting ready for our Tuber sale and planting/cutting discussions. There may be cuttings and tubers for sale. Bring some of your own if they are sprouted or rooted. Anything that comes into our meeting room is for sale; please limit your swapping to the parking lot. Who will bring treats to share with your fellow dahianeers?

## Show and Tell

What a terrific confab we had sharing cool tools and other dahlia related items. Frank demonstrated a common yogurt container that he uses to pot up his tubers. He punches holes in the bottom first. He jump starts tubers in the yogurt cartons and then plants them in the yogurt plastic so it acts as both a starter home and a gopher cage! Frank also shared an aromatic bag of Saigon Cinnamon he bought at SF Herb Company on 250 14<sup>th</sup> St at Mission. Frank uses the cinnamon in place of sulfur to cover exposed surfaces on tubers after dividing. Frank distributed cinnamon tips from [gardeningknowhow.com](http://gardeningknowhow.com). Check them out. Cathy says she successfully used cinnamon last season and loved the pleasant smell. Pat swears by Lobaugh Dahlias \$15 snips. She also passed around a bottle of Jack's Blossom Booster 10-30-20 \$16.99 on Amazon, to be used in spray after buds have set as a superbloom. Lola demonstrated how she uses 1 inch wide green garden tape for dahlia labels using a black Sharpie. Devorah favors Rapid Rooter plugs for starting



cuttings because she can easily spot visible roots when the cutting is ready for a 4x4. The ooohs! serenaded the appearance of Devi's cordless Craftsman electric dividing tool.



She loves the effortless precision and the lack of danger from being cut. Frank and Deborah chimed in with how much they value their Dremmel dividers. Carl

whipped out his daunting hawk-billed Colonial pocket knife, opting for the low technology, but higher risk for accidents option. Maggie intrigued many with her magic German Fertilizer, Green 24. Phil attributed wonders to this last season. The price has gone down on Amazon as the demand for it has gone up. Good.

Tinee shared a whole shed full of cool tools. She wields her mini rake—smallish but tough-ish (like Tin herself?)—for narrow spaces between dahlia rows. Her 3 different lethal weeders vied for our attention. The Hori Hori stainless steel terminator from Sloat has one disadvantage: its handle is drab brown—the color of dirt. “When I put it down, it disappears,” laughed Tinee



sheepishly. Several older DSCers were cast back in time when Tin displayed a sturdy dinner knife which Dick Meyers had long ago honed to a sharp edge. Tin wields hers for weeding; Deborah uses hers as a dividing chisel. Dick Meyers'

memory lingers with Deborah every time she uses the plastic “seat” that fits onto the top of 5 gallon buckets. Deborah can fill the bucket with stuff, and use it as both a lid and a padded throne when she needs a break. Orlando used to watch Deborah arduously poke scissors into milk carton after milk carton. The classic a-tool-for-every-job kind of handy man, O bought her a double-bladed retraco knife. Deborah uses the curved blade to poke and slash her mountains of milkcartons;



afterwards the blade retracts so it won't inadvertently cut nearby valuables. Lastly, Deborah passed around red-handled stainless steel Chinese scissors from Irving St. \$3.99. They have long skinny blades to poke into dahlia plants and wide handles for more comfortable grip. One year she misplaced a pair; the next year she

re-discovered them 2' down in her compost hole—perfectly fine! Great Rousing Questions and Answers session. We'll have to do this again! If you have something interesting that you use with your dahlia operation, please bring it to a meeting for Show and Tell.

## Virtue Rewarded

For renewing our DSC membership and getting Devi our forms and checks in early we earned 1,2, or 3 raffle tickets. Lola won the \$15 prize to spend at our Tuber and Plant Sale. The \$20 pick goes to Diane Barlow; and our grand \$25 winners are Chad and Tom! Congratulations to all and major thanks to Devi for organizing the whole shebang.



## Generosity of Friends

What wonderful gooey custard and jam pastries Lola brought. Thanks to Pat for a healthy fruit platter including juicy pineapple. Oh, Maggie, those chocolate bombs were fantastic. Who brought the mint Girl Scout Cookies? Sooo goooood.

## Hobnobbing with Dahlianistas

The Pacific Southwest Conference, hosted by the San Leandro Dahlia Society, gathered many of the Bay Area's dahlia growers. Alas, no one came up from Southern California. The once-thriving five societies down there have dwindled down to Beverly, Roy, Bette and Marilyn only one, San Diego, and it is faltering. We all congratulated Ken and Marilyn Masurat for winning the prestigious Dudley Medal for their Dr. Karl. Big Deal! Gorgeous Medal. Another highlight of PSW is always the PSW Show Winners compilations. Karen Zydner slices and dices these so we have three ways to look at the amalgamated results [2017 Winners by Size or Type](#), [Courts of Honor](#), and [Top Twenty](#). Click here to see each. Pam Howden barely beat out Eden Benary for the top spot. Use these lists when you are judiciously allotting space in your patch this year. Kristi Whitfield, who grows in Lakeside Park, organized excellent food including fruit for the careful people and chocolate for the addicted. Beverly Dahlstedt arranged a terrific raffle which included two \$50 gift certificates from Stonehouse Dahlias in Utah, who follow the Corralitos model of selling rooted cuttings. Dahlias by Les and Viv, Dan's Dahlias and Corralitos also generously contributed. Mark Oldenkamp donated coupons for a free dozen of EGG-LANDS BEST eggs to EVERYONE. Other wonderful prizes included a dahlia tablecloth, a fully loaded tool bag, dahlia books, vases, birdhouses, and even a worm bin. Wow!!! Kristine reported that Dr. Walbot et. al. successfully brought back seeds from 12 species dahlias from several trips to Mexico. They will grow these at Stanford along with Edna C, whose genes have been mapped. She hopes to trace the differentiation over time in the

gene lines. Maybe we can organize a field trip over the summer to see her Genome Project in action?



**Beverly, Roy,  
Bette and  
Marilyn**

**Katy,  
Iris, & Kristine**



**Kevin, Beverly &  
Andrew**

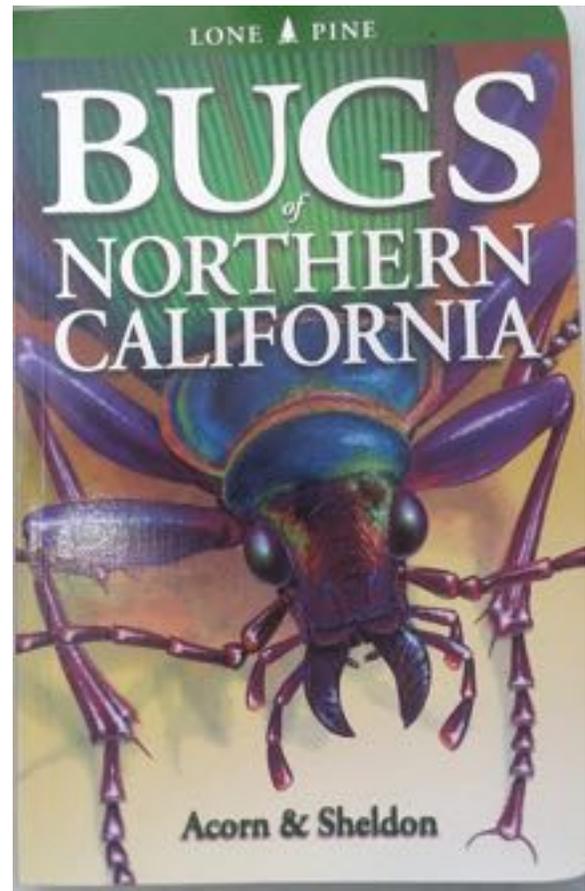
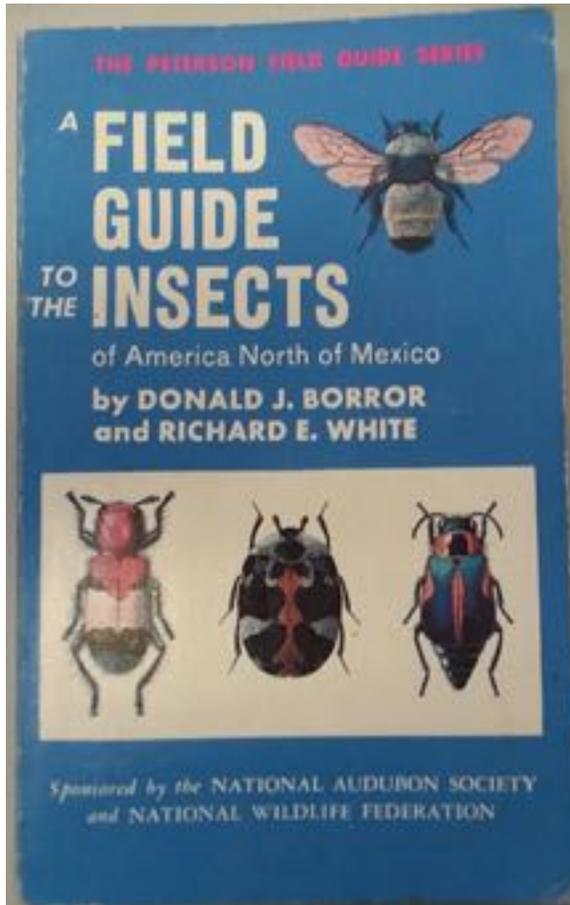
# Good Bug or Bad Bug?

Our keynote speaker, Kevin started us off by citing the 1889 use of predatory insects to control Cottony Cushion Scale. Kevin's six steps included:

1. Eliminate disruptive broad (draconian) spectrum pesticides; use narrow range products such as Spinosad, BT or wettable sulfur. Don't treat the whole garden at one time; rather treat problem areas as they arise and leave other areas safe for beneficial biota to thrive
2. Build refuges for beneficials. Plant alyssum, clover or yarrow near your dahlias to provide an incubator for the many stages of insect life. Colorful hedgerows sustain many welcome guests
3. Monitor your bug population. Day critters are different than the night shift critters. Dangle a sticky tape to see what sort of critters you have already; monitor throughout the season to see if things change
4. Develop cultural tactics such as using row covers to thwart crummy intruders and keep friendlies inside
5. Release Beneficials: Lacewings, predatory wasps, syrphid flies, harlequin bugs, Pirate bugs—most voracious in their larval forms. Arbicoorganics.com have pictures on line and mail out helpful crawlies. Rincon-Vitova is headquartered in California



6. Monitor: try holding a white plate under your dahlia bloom and tapping. What falls out? Get a magnifying loupe or a hand lens. Buy and STUDY Bugs of Northern California or A Field Guide to Insects North of Mexico.



## ADS Spring Workshop

For the first time in almost 20 years, the American Dahlia Society Board will hold its 2 ½ day meeting IN THE BAY AREA. You are invited to attend. The best day for this would be, Saturday, April 20: Sonesta Hotel, [1820 Barber Lane 95035](https://www.sonesta.com/1820-Barber-Lane), [408-570-5400](https://www.sonesta.com/408-570-5400). On Saturday Dr. Walbot will update the Dahlia Genome Project and Dr. Papu will address the Dahlia Virus Project. Harry Rissetto will lead a discussion on

“distinction” in judging seedlings. There is no fee to join but you will be in charge of funding your own lunch.

## GG Park Dell Doings



Lou is experimenting with root suppressant black tarps in his section. He just got a mountain of top soil to put over his green pasture. Erik and Nicholas lured friends to the hillside to weed. Her weeds in control, Sue has begun sinking gopher cages in place; they take a lot

of digging, so she paces herself over three months. Lou,

Devorah and Pat have begun taking cuttings in the greenhouse. They hope to have a few early achievers for sale at our March meeting. Deborah's continued to bloom until a few hours of frost blackened the leaves. Sue claims there must be a deep closet at the Maus Haus that hides a portrait of aging dahlias—the Dorian Grey dahlia painting, as it were. Deborah continues to



take late season cuttings from her sprouting stragglers as well as beginning to lift her sophomore clumps. She invites anyone



who wants to try a hand at her electric divider to come to her Maus Haus and learn the technique. Lou, Devi and Pat report that they've already taken over 100 cuttings in the greenhouse and still have three more weeks to make more.

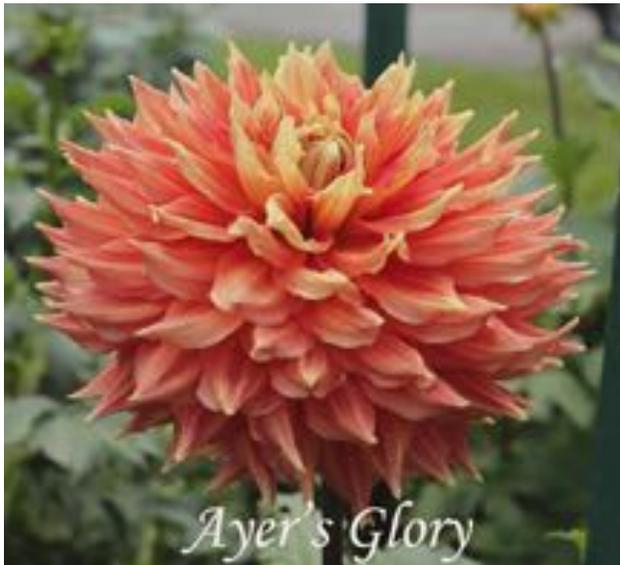


## Cavalcade of Alluring Dahlias

Many of you have emailed me about the dazzling display of dahlias I've posted during the Mud Months. Phil wrote, "I want to buy them all." These are snazzy pix from all over the world that I nab from the web to remind us all about how glorious our summer gardens will be and to encourage you to buy some new varieties. To check availability, go to [dahliaaddict.com](http://dahliaaddict.com) to see if

a particular cultivar is for sale in the U.S. Hope you enjoy the bouquet I've chosen for this month:





*Ayer's Glory*



*Black Jack*



*Bristol Fleck*



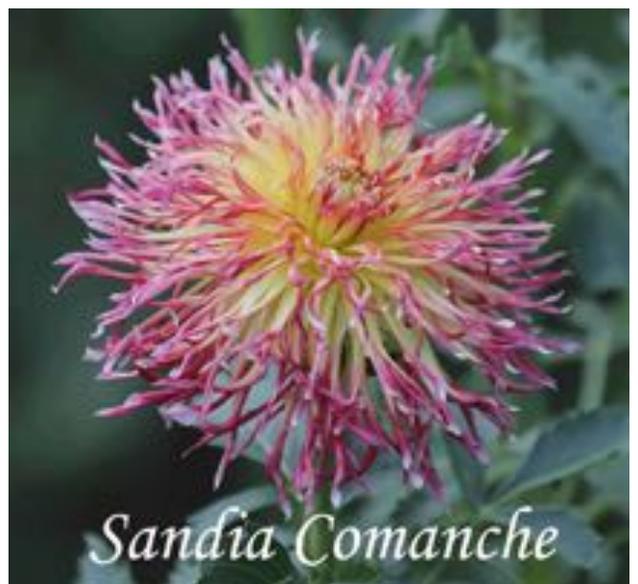
*Clearview Edie*

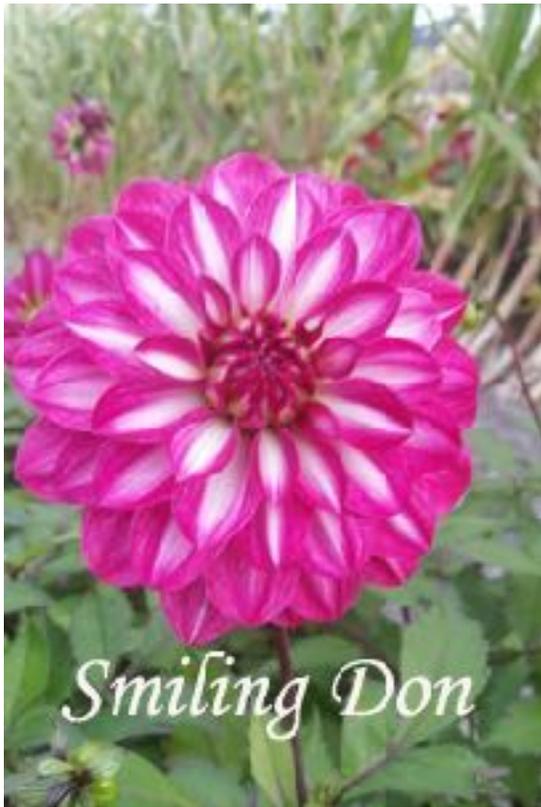


*Hollyhill Pink Cadillac*



*Hollyhill Sophia*





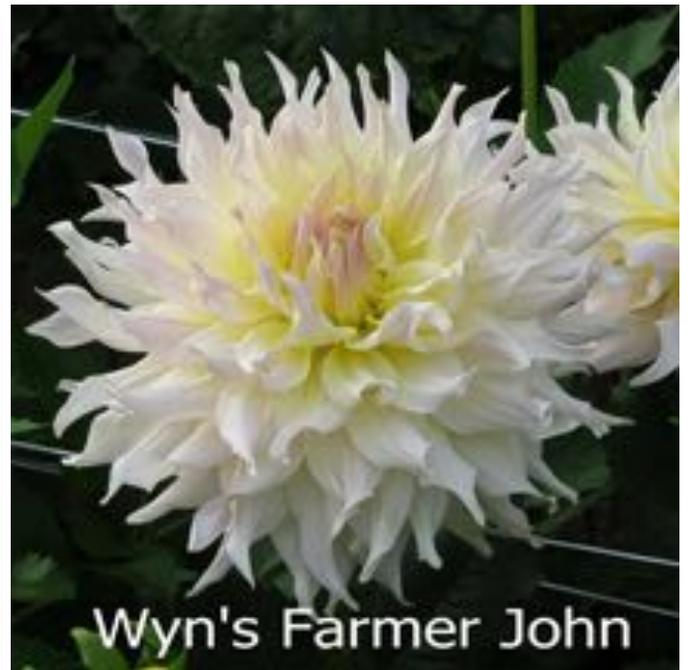
*Smiling Don*



*Tohumcuk*



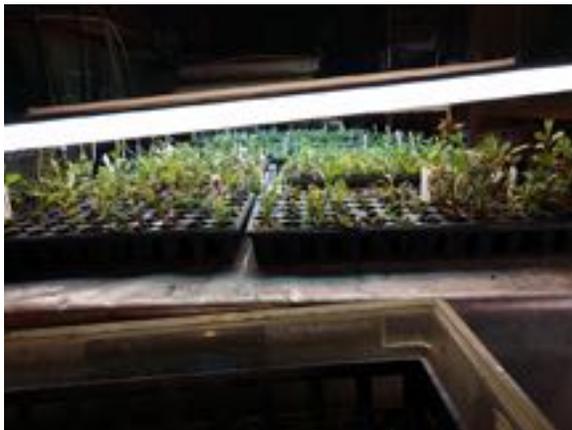
*Windhaven Highlight*



*Wyn's Farmer John*

## Muster into March

Now is time to take your dormant tubers out of hibernation and bring their boxes, bags, buckets into a warmer spot to germinate. Most dahlias like to sprout in 62-65 degrees. I use my loft; Sue uses her oven and its pilot light—when not baking actual cookies. I use milk cartons for jump starting; Frank uses yogurt containers; Carl uses 1 gallon pots. Our weather has been so kooky: for a week we had record-breaking heat and then weather-breaking cold: it almost froze in San Francisco — unthinkable!!!! Plants are confused. To bud or not to bud? It's a big gamble for them. If they bud early, they get a longer season and first serve by the pollinators; if the cold interrupts this cycle, it sweeps their genetic chips off the table for a whole season. Such a dilemma. Are tubers or cuttings beginning to arrive at your door??? Such an exciting moment. Pot them up immediately and give them lots of light. Remember tubers want NO water until they've germinated; cuttings with their weeny teeny roots want little sips every day. I am beginning to dig up my sophomore Dell clumps. Most have bulging eyes and even sprouts already. It definitely makes dividing less magic and more clearly science. Do you have seeds from last year's beauties? Now is the time to place them on a wet paper



towel and cover them with a another damp paper towel. When you see wonderful sprouts, transfer individuals into a 4x4 of loose potting soil with lots of perlite and put in a sunny window or under shop lights. These are your genetic lottery tickets for next year. Christy grows pedigreed dahlias at Lake Park in Oakland; Chris Dix scored an adjacent area just for his seedlings. Lucky guy. Maybe you have a neighbor with an unused area you could brighten up with a few dahlias??? Right now keep the weeds at bay; compost; add some chicken or even better bunny manure. Consider a judicious row of alyssum and yarrow to harbor beneficial insects through your growing season. Put April 20 on your calendar for the ADS Spring Workshop. Please donate your excess tubers to our April 14<sup>th</sup> sale. DSC needs your contributions!

Yours in dirt,  
Deborah

Layout /webmistress: Deborah Joseph (mentored by Dan Steves)

Snail Mail: Patricia Hunter

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Kristi's Garden at Lake Merritt

