



NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, June 8 @ 7:30 @ 9th and Lincoln.



PROGRAM - Parks Trust Representative talks about our 501C-3 status. We'll have a round table discussion on early growing stages—problems and diverse solutions (pun included). Deborah will conduct show and tell to distinguish “good” containers for show from “poor” choices and how to scour garage sales and thrift shops. One pound baggies of Calcium Nitrate will be available for \$1. Please bring extra dahlia plants, cuttings or tubers for the Final Sale opportunity. **HANDS-ON SEMINAR:** From 6:15-6:45 PM Deborah will conduct a disbudding, pinching out, deleafing and bottom tidying session at the Dahlia Dell in Golden Gate Park next to the Conservatory of Flowers

THE QUALITY OF YOUR POT:

Kevin Larken, co-owner of famed Corralitos Gardens, vice president of the American Dahlia Association and chair of the ADS Research Committee, walked us through a couple of the experiments that Pennsylvania State University is conducting on how potting medium and container size affect growing dahlias. Swan Island donated hundreds of tubers of Gitts Perfection. One hundred fifty tubers were planted in 3” pots and 150 in 5” pots. Likewise, 150 were planted in coarse soil mix, 150 in medium texture, and 150 in fine planting soil for a total of 6 sets of 150 Gitts Perfections. 90% of the tubers sprouting in the first week sprouted in the fine soil; none germinated during the first week in the coarse mix. Kevin posits that perhaps the fine dirt allows more contact with the surface area of the tuber thereby stimulating it to germinate sooner. Over all, 20% of all tubers rotted within the 40 day pervue of the experiment. Half of all tubers which rotted, did so in the fine soil containers. Tubers initially grew more quickly in 3” pots rather than 5” pots. Tubers were more successful in shorter fatter containers than taller pots of equal volume. Kevin explained the saturation zone is the area in the container that stays wet longest. In a shorter squat-ter plant, the saturation zone is shallower than the saturation zone of a taller narrower container. Since finer soil holds more moisture, the riskiest combination for rotting a tuber would be a tall skinny pot with super fine soil. Kevin concluded from this experiment that indeed, fine soil containing lots of peat moss and sand, germinates quickly but has a potential for later holding too much water content resulting in potential rot. So one should start one's tubers in small shallow pots with fine soil, but when the root mass has filled this space, gently transplant the entire mass either directly into the ground or into larger, squat pots with coarser potting mix. The old shibboleth that only singles and certain open centered dahlias do well in pots has been shattered. Containers placed on dirt grow better than those placed on concrete because the roots will continue out of the pot. Kevin spelled out the pot rule: the size of the pot should be at least 1/3 the height of the plant. So a 60” bush requires a 20” tall container. Anyone who would like to donate to further dahlia research should contact Mac Boyer. ADS has a 501C-3 tax status.



CROSS POLLINATION:



What could be better than exchanging ideas with great dahlia growers at the beginning of the season? Exchanging dahlia cuttings! Recently Orlando and I toured Linda's Dahlias in Washougal, Washington. Bob, Linda's husband, not only showed us around the spacious grounds right on the river, but also through their 3 greenhouses and his tuber warehouse. Bob uses heated beds to rouse sprouts on his donor tubers and sequesters his new cuttings in covered mini-greenhouses within the larger greenhouse. Famous too for tomatoes, Bob raises hundreds from seed for sale to locals. We brought up several Bay Area introductions for them to try; in exchange, Bob generously combed his cuttings for rare and wonderful gems like Nick Sr., Scott's Alchemy, and Verrone's Kristin some of which were already 20" tall. (A tense moment ensued at the border checkpoint when the agent went over every leaf on the dahlia forest waving in the back of Orlando's Prius.) Linda showered us

with two huge bags of her homemade snicker doodles and peanut butter cookies. Wow! After 45 minutes of wending through verdant pastures of frolicking kid goats, sheep attended by llamas, cattle and horses, decorated with magnificent clouds of dogwoods, azaleas, rodedendrons and fruit orchards in full bloom, we pulled into Max Olieu's 6 acres in Battleground. Max, famous for his Rhondas and multiple bloom winners, grows 10-15 clumps of the SAME cultivar to insure well-matched x3 and x5's. Standing in the skeleton of his shade house, Max explained that it's as much protection from rain and flying debris as sun. Lucky Max, his Idaho relatives will be visiting soon; they help till, label and plant all his stock in a single week's stay. After generously letting me loot his tuber trove, Max cut us a bouquet of redolent lilacs to scent up the car on our drive home. Gads, dahlia people's generosity just glows in the dark!



IN MEMORIUM:

Bob Bloomfield, remarkable dahlia grower, terrific hybridizer, and inspiring mentor, died in Portland, Oregon just before his 70th wedding anniversary. To tend their 3000+ dahlia clumps after work, Bob and Myrtle installed floodlights over their patch. Their zeal was often rewarded with Best in Show, Sweepstakes and Best New Seedling. ADS bestowed upon Bob and Myrtle their highest award, the Gold Achievement Medal, for their efforts as President, cutting master, gene mixer, and dahlia coach. Bob loved developing seedlings, leaving us a legacy which includes: Myrtle's Folly, Pink Passion, Urchin, MBB, Noel and the infamous Half-Ass.



DAHLIA DELL DOERS:



A whole new season begins! Pat has graciously assumed responsibility for half of the Juul's area and Lou P. will farm the rest. When not hand-watering her precious crop, Pat has also been sighted painstakingly weeding the entire hillside. Tinnee crafted her ingenious metal cages to outfox those nefarious gobbling gophers and planted each dahlia in one of her snap-open contraptions. Frank, too, has begun sinking each of his clumps in anti-gopher protection. Wish them luck. Sue, John and Jimmy periodically dig holes for Deborah's gems while Vince and Devorah help her with planting. Huge dirty thanks to ALL the Dahlia Dell Irregulars!

GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS:

How wonderful to see Mary Hanson back, with her arms full of milk cartons and brownies! Ron bestowed upon DSC yet another whopping box full of luscious Meyer lemons as well as chocolate cookies. Devorah brought great cuttings including Wyn's EEEK!!!, Arulen Princess, and Lilac Time. Deborah brought in flats of milk cartoned beauties including Mingus Wayne S, Pam Howden, Devon Liam, and Shea's Rainbow. Francine must have been cooking for hours to bring such a munificent trove of vegetable lumpia. Jamie brought lip-smacking lemon cake. Baker Bill reprised his scrumptious pineapple upside down cake. Pat (as always!) brought assorted chic cookies. Thanks to Leo for the chocolate cupcakes. (You just can't go wrong with chocolate with this group!) John's peregrinations resulted in several non-dahlia plants to share. Devorah reported that she mixed cornmeal in with her dahlias and enjoyed very little mildew last season. Thanks to Orlando for his technical acumen with our snazzy computer projector.



GO FOR THE GOLD!

This year DSC hosts the Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference Show August 21-22. That means that not only could you win colorful ribbons but also \$\$ and MEDALS!!!! Check the schedule to note the special classes and plan appropriately. Remember that you do NOT have to grow your own dahlias to enter the arrangement categories. Dazzle us with your creativity. Start taking photos now!

[CLICK HERE FOR SCHEDULE AND ENTRY CARDS.](#)



JOYOUS JUNE:

Ah, first flowers and last planting opportunities. The dilemma: to pinch out the first bud or not? I pinch out all my first buds by plucking off below the set of leaves under the first bud and the two sister buds beside it. Kevin and Tinnee pinch out even earlier when they have 4 sets of leaves. (Lou P. and the Juuls rarely pinch out terminal buds.) I think pinching out (or “stopping”) helps consolidate the energy in the roots and stem. The resultant plant will be bushier. Some people stop twice! If you let the first bud develop—even if you disbud the two on either side, you will probably be disappointed with a crotch-bound bloom stuck deep inside a plant surrounded by developing laterals. Disbudding also gets you a larger bloom and a stronger longer stem. Continue to thwart earwigs, snails and slugs. So many butterflies and moths mean caterpillars soon. A systemic insecticide cuts down on this damage. Safer brand spray is a green alternative. Lou L. and Bob Papp recommend mixing Osmocote, a granulated slow release fertilizer, into the soil by your clumps. As your dahlia grows taller, begin to remove the bottom leaves that sometimes drag in the water. Before tossing these leaves, examine the back side for potential eggs, larvae, or other evidence of who’s living in your garden. Watering: your dahlias will tell you when they need water by drooping slightly. They do best by getting very wet, and then drying out until you note the slight droop again. A drip system that bottom waters saves water and protects your future flowers from getting too heavy from the overhead water droplets and breaking off. By June all the dahlias you overwintered in the ground should have sprouted up. If not, GENTELY finger down to discover the reason they have not emerged: rotten from too much rain? Eaten by gophers? a cutting planted too shallowly never developed tubers? Or just a slow starter with sprouts just below the surface? Of course when I went to replace a non-starter, who should thwart my trowel by sticking up its wee green nose? I think the tuber heard my catastrophic plans, gathered all its energy together, and overnight thrust up enough of a sprout to stay my eviction!

Yours in Dirt,

Deborah

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Originally Organized
In 1917
In San Francisco

Dahlia was adopted as the
Official Flower of San Francisco
On October 4, 1926
By its Board of Supervisor

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