



NEXT MEETING: 9 APRIL at 7 PM. There will be **MANY** wonderful cuttings for sale, especially rare ones that we hope members will grow and bring back scions the following year. Bring any roots or plants you'd like to share with DSC. Anything that comes into our meeting room is **FOR SALE**. Please conduct your swaps in the parking lot. We will discuss plans for our big **TUBER AND CUTTING SALE** on April 27. Who will bring yummys to share with your fellow dahlia planters?

BEE FRIENDLY

Chad Baker kindly turned in this report from our March Meeting: Terry Oxford, owner of UrbanBee San Francisco, has won 3 Good Food awards for her "Tree Blossom Honey." A long time environmental activist, Terry informs people about Systemic Neonicotinoids, herbicides and fungicides which are the #1 culprit in pollinator demise of birds, bees and butterflies.



Terry's presentation moved us to think about protecting the health of our pollinators. Her hives are found on the rooftops and HVAC systems scattered across the multitude of San Francisco's neighborhoods. Terry blessed us with an amazing array of honey samples from

these hives. Each of her samples highlighted the different tastes of the primary sources of nectar for each of the neighborhoods across our city.

Some of her most profound points were the worldwide reduction of beneficial insects biomass by 75% due to the use of these systemic poisons. Many of the chemicals and pesticides still used in the US are illegal in most other countries, including 28 countries in the



European Union alone. One of the most common and toxic substances is called Neonicotinoids, some of which are more than 10,000 times stronger than DDT, which you may remember nearly caused the extinction of the American Bald Eagle. Systemic Neonicotinoids have synergistic actions with other toxic substances like fungicides; they remain present for the entire life of the plant. Once the plant dies, these harmful chemicals are leached into the soil and then washed into our waterways as runoff.

Guttation is when a plant exudes a small amount of sap through the tips of its leaves. This is often confused with dew, but not be anything further from the truth. Dew is condensed water which is pulled from the air when temperatures drop lower than the levels humidity can support. Guttation is a solution of carbohydrates, vitamins and water which seeps from the tips of the leaves; many insects ingest this to survive. When systemic pesticides, herbicides and fungicides are used on plants, this tiny drop becomes poisonous. Neonicotinoids are not only exuded from the plants through guttation but are found in the pollen and nectar of flowers. This often leads to the premature death of infant bees and other pollinators.

Terry points out that many research studies published today could be subject to bias as they are either being performed by the companies that are creating these chemicals or universities that are highly sponsored by these companies. As an active lobbyist and long time environmental activist, she also stated that an obstacle to preventing the widespread sale and use of these chemicals is the manufacturing industries are continually lobbying to weaken the regulatory standards.



Terry encourages us to use organic soil and amendments. Create habitats for pollinators such as the Mason Bee. Plant flowers and plants that are primary food sources to our pollinators, such as planting fennel to attract Anise Swallowtail butterflies, which are a native of the Bay Area.

Terry wanted to share some good news and something very special with us at the end of her presentation. Bees N Blooms (beesnblooms.com) in Santa Rosa have partnered with Terry and are selling flowering trees for bees that are not treated with any systemic pesticides or fungicides. Go and visit them once they open for the summer and see their amazing flower farm for pollinators. You'll see butterflies, bumbles and lots of birds and even little frogs. Plus they have the largest labyrinth in California and its made out of lavender plants. So Terry suggests that if you just want feel good, go and see all the life out there proving, if you plant it, they will come.

GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS

Thanks to Leo for his chocolate chip and M&M cookies, to Gino for his bite-sized brownies and to Ron for his bountiful box of Meyer lemons.

Major thanks to Lou, Pat, Devi and Tinnee for their magnificent cuttings! So big already and such variety!



CUTTING ROOM HEROES

Please take time to thank Devi, Lou, Pat and Tinnee for all the time, energy, expertise and caring that they have put into making the cutting program such a success this year. [Click Here](#) for a step-by-step photo essay of their entire process.

FERRY FRIDAY

April 26, the day before our sale, we need help ferrying 1200-1400 cuttings from trucks to the courtyard and into the auditorium 11:30-3:00. Snapping all the tables open and arranging them is a prerequisite before we can display all the gorgeous dahlia plants. The more volunteers, the quicker the task!

TUBER SALE ETIQUETTE

Please arrive around 7:50 AM in the back parking lot to help carry boxes inside. Please bring: your ADS Classification Book (or you can buy one at our sale for \$5), a black sharpie pen, surgery gloves if you're going to handle a lot of tubers, and perhaps a magnifying glass to spot eyes. Do please bring your extra tubers. We will sell tubers for \$3 and unnamed tubers—Surprises!—for \$1. If you have tubers sprouting now, pop them in half gallon milk cartons or into gallon black pots and we'll sell them for \$5-6-or even \$10 depending on their development. Try to wear a dahlia shirt or at least a flowery top? We need counters to pre-total purchases whilst customers wait in line; guides to help shoppers choose appropriate varieties; sorters to lay out tubers; box labelers; a receipt checker at door; email collector so customers can be apprised of our show for next year; picture setter outers to match photos with varieties;

consolidators to clean and remove tables as we sell; and most of all: **GREAT HELPFUL ATTITUDES!!!** We'll share a potluck lunch afterwards, so please bring a delightful comestible to share. The fridge and oven will be available. We'll have worked up mighty appetites. Anyone coming to help, please budget **AT LEAST 3 hours of volunteering**. We need help throughout the **WHOLE** sale, not just until you have purchased what you want in our members-only madness. That first hour 9:30-10:30 is utter mayhem. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!**

PHOTO OP

Please let Devorah (drdevisf@gmail.com) know which varieties you might be donating to our sale so she can prepare pictures to accompany them. Our public likes to **SEE** what they are buying. A beautiful blooming dahlia in a frame induces more purcha\$ing than a brown stubby potato or a green spriggy plant. Remind yourself to thank Devi for creating and maintaining this photographic library!



POWERDAHLIA?

Professional Sports rely on statistics to indicate whom to \$ign up. Now we dahlia growers have several statistics to help us choose which dahlias to grow each season. The March ADS Bulletin just posted their **Cream of the Crop** (all the cultivars



reported from the dahlia shows around the US and Canada that have received at least 15 combined blue and higher awards) and their **FABULOUS FIFTY** (the 94 varieties which won 50 or more combined awards in 2018). Herewith are the top dozen dazzlers in ascending order: 1. Elvira 2. Valley Porcupine, 3. AC Ben 4. Embrace 5. Fancy Pants 6. Parkland Rave 7. AC Abby 8. Pam Howden 9. Clearview Daniel 10. Clearview Edie 11. Badger Twinkle 12. Hollyhill Black Beauty. Use your ADS Classification Book to make wise, statistically based decisions.

Nevertheless, we put pretty pictures at our sale to override your judicious thinking brain and appeal to your spontaneous impulse delight.

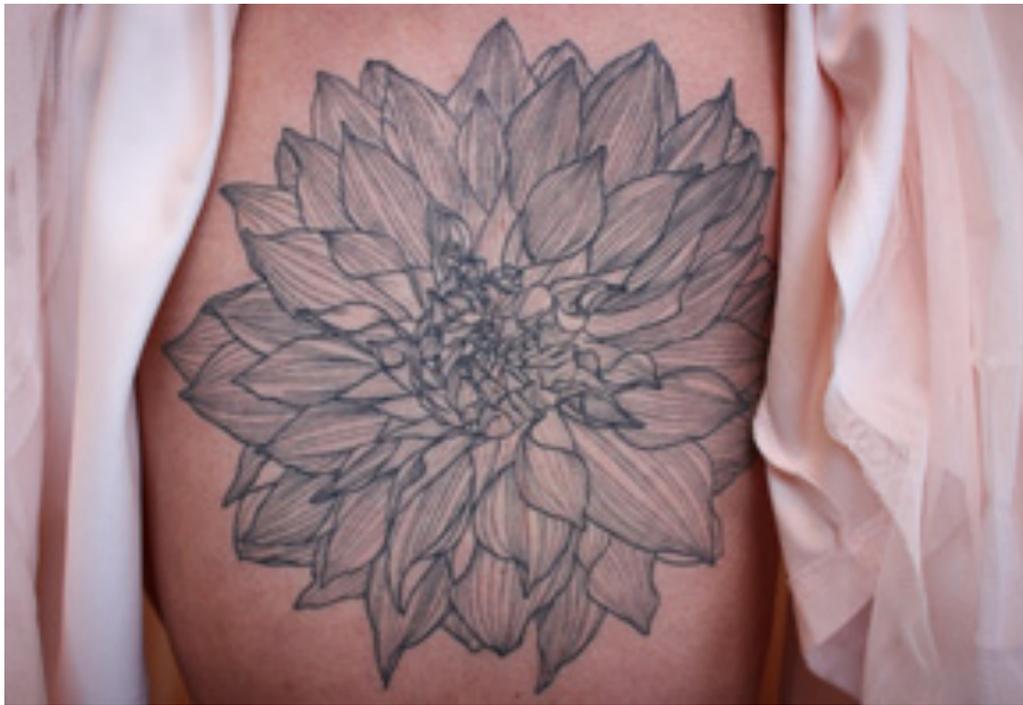
DAHLIA BLOOMS ON...THIGH?



Hannah Fischer grows, sells and hybridizes dahlias in Minnesota. For 6 years she has sold dahlias at local Farmers Markets. She asked tattoo artist John T from Tough Luck Tattoo to immortalize her Café au Lait, forever blooming on her thigh. Hannah posts tips on growing and pictures of her process on Facebook



@hannahsdahlias.



HOW TO PLANT WITH GOPHER CAGES

Consider constructing your gopher cages using Tinnee's elegant design. ([CLICK HERE](#) for complete instructions). Dig a hole such that you can completely sink your empty gopher cage leaving but a wee inch of rim above the surface level. Then fill in half with soil. When you are ready to plant, pound your stake



in adjacent to but not inside the cage. Add your secret sauce, your plant/tuber/cutting and fill in with soil. Many people choose to add enough soil to cover the roots but gradually fill in the rest of the hole as their plant matures. In anticipation, Sue has already dug holes for all her cages on the hillside of the Dell, sunk all her cages and now can now plant whenever she has a dahlia ready for The Big Time.

A RUEFUL TALE



Whilst at Costco, I stopped to take a picture of their dahlia offerings to warn why buying dahlias at a BIG BOX store is a bad idea. Then I looked closer at the picture on the cover. It looked like Zoey Rey! I have been trying to grow Zoey Rey for the last 5 years. I've paid \$9-\$14 each for tubers only 2 of which have ever bloomed for me. Costco's deal: 5 Zoey Rey and 5 Contiko for \$12. Ashamedly, I had to go for it. At home I opened Contiko first. Just as I thought: these are pot roots which have been handled and handled and handled.

They have no padding; they are wrecked. Almost all the necks are broken. They are a mess.

I manage to pare down to the crowns of 5 and put them in milk cartons with my fingers crossed. With misgiving, I open Zoey Rey. Not as badly mangled. Still many broken necks, but amazingly all five have sprouts! In fact, two have



extra sprouts! So I pot up 8 Zoey Rey in milk cartons! The big question is: are these REALLY Zoey Rey? Oftimes these bulk



bags have a jumble of different varieties but not the one advertised. We'll see. Have I been foolishly optimistic or duped? We'll know in June.

APPLAUDING APRIL

Yay! It's time to plant! Although I note that Carl already has Wolfe Terraces all embedded and many of his dahlias are

already 2' tall! Phil has his first 6 dozen cuttings mounted in their gopher cages, turning their happy faces to our continuing gentle rains. Dahlias that I left in the Dell are beginning to push through to the sky—34 at last count. I sprinkle my emergents with Sluggo Plus to fend off snails, slugs and earwigs. (I found

Sluggo Plus at the Airport Costco for \$18!!! Costco also had



Bayers fertilizer and insecticide for \$18.) How to plant cuttings: Dig a hole 6-8" deep. Place your stake NOW. Do NOT wait until your plant needs a stake; place it now to avoid impaling tubers or smushing roots with an injudicious placement of your stake. LABEL IMMEDIATELY. Add your secret sauce (more about secret sauce later). Swish up sauce. Pluck the bottom-most 2 leaves off. If you hope to have your cuttings make tubers for next season, you must plant at least 2 nodes below the surface. You might even leave 2" of soil out of your hole and gently fill in as your plant grows taller.

PLANTS WITH TUBERS: Ideally, drop the entire root mass into your hole prepared with stake, label and Secret Sauce. Planting Tubers: Dig hole, pound stake, label, swish secret sauce. Add tuber. Cover with at least 2" soil. Remember that tubers need 62-64 degrees to germinate. It takes pretty warm weather in San Francisco to get our plots warm up sufficiently to convince tubers to sprout. You might put a 5 gallon pot over the spot to act as a mini greenhouse and warm up the spot. I prefer starting mine in milk cartons inside the house where I KNOW the temperatures are warmer than outside. That way when I plant, I KNOW for SURE that my dahlia is viable. So plant naked, unsprouted tubers at your own risk. Remember that cuttings and tubers and tuber plants have different watering needs. The super-fine roots of cuttings need a little moisture often. Half a cup morning and night usually suffices unless we have rain. Plants with tubers have well established root systems already; read their leaves. If the leaves are erect and turgid, no water; if the leaves begin to droop, water. Tubers need NO WATER until they sprout. Tubers do not have roots yet; they cannot absorb moisture; they will turn to mush with too much water. DO NOT WATER TUBERS in the ground.

SECRET SAUCE: Every dahlianeer puts something in the hole when s/he plants. I use a balanced granular fertilizer 5-5-5 or 8-8-8 or 15-15-15 –just so all the numbers are the same. I also add a teaspoon or so of micorrhyzae. Supposedly these send hyphae throughout your garden to help your dahlia get nutrients from farther afield and also act as an early warning system for the plants to “talk” to one another (???). Kristine Albrecht started this and her dahlias are magnificent. I dust my roots with a little sulfur. For the last few years, we have suffered the spotted snake millipede infestation; this little pixie dusting of sulfur seems to protect my tubers all season. Lastly, I add a sprinkling of calcium nitrate. Purportedly the calcium engenders stronger stems. Can’t hurt. Other people add a blessing of compost straight from their bins, to establish a rich micro-biota. Some look for fertilizer with trace minerals; the depth of dahlia colors depends upon these atoms of trace minerals. Fishing types like to plant atop fish guts. Bone meal is a good additive except that most “garden” bone meal has almost no bone stuff in it and so is usually a waste of money. Adding Bayer’s Rose fertilizer and systemic insect repellent granules can give your young plants a certain protection for up to 6 weeks—just enough to get them well established. Romeos in Half Moon Bay is a great source. Sue uses vermin castings and compost to her cages. What do you use? Let us know, please.

LABELS: I use old venetian blind strips. Lou used tags made from cut up Clorox bottles for a while. Paula uses commercial plastic ones with long spikes and oval heads for names. Phil suffices with the name tags that come with his cuttings. Mike Schelp used green plastic tape on which he wrote with a Sharpie. John P writes on yellow strips bought in bulk at the nursery. Sue, Pat, Lou and Devi print beautiful labels on sticky tape, adhere them to card stock and laminate them against



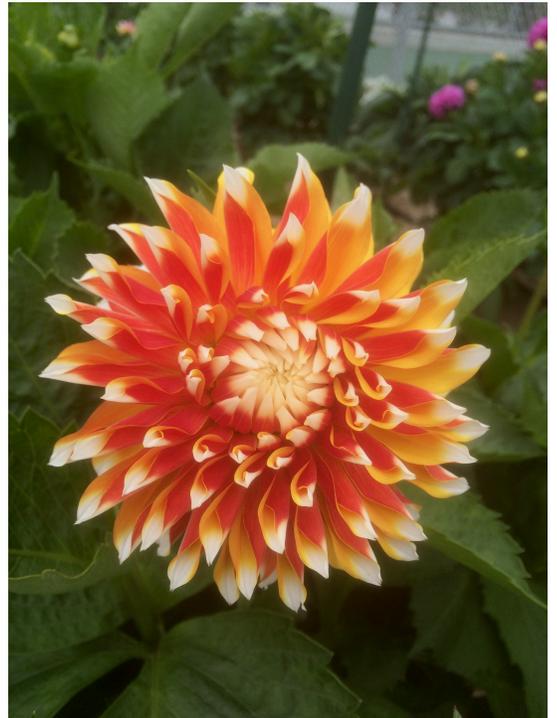
weather. The public loves these because they are legible. I tried using a black marker but words faded over the season. Now I write in pencil. Neither rain, spray, sun, nor dirt erases my pencil labels. What do you use?

EXCEL SHEET AND GARDEN MAP: No matter how few or how many dahlias you grow, keep a dahlia map showing where each plant is and its name. If you make your spaces large enough, you can also take notes throughout the season: needs more sun, give to Society, best clump, gets 5' tall, or short, put in front. I also keep an XL spread sheet which lists the cultivars down the left side and across the top are Position in garden, ADS #, size, form, color, and source (from whom I got the dahlia.) With this XL sheet you can immediately spot trends or “holes” in your plan. The first time Tinnee made an XL sheet, she asked “Why is everything in just one column?” All her cultivars were orange! Given that I grow around 220 at the Dell, I can easily see if I have only 1 Stellar or no NXO. So I know what to shop for at our tuber sale. Later in the season I use my XL sheet as a handy reference at Dahlia Competitions.

DAHLIAS OF THE YEAR: Our two challenge dahlias are Bloomquist Candy Corn and Lo-Blush. Even if you live in an apartment on the 11th floor, please buy a Lo-Blush, transfer it to a larger pot, add your secret sauce and grow it on your balcony. Mignon Singles happily grow, asking so little of you: a bit of sun, some water now and then, and copious dead-heading. If you only grow ONE dahlia this year, please grow our



challenge flower Lo-Blush. This jaunty baby will continually delight you with bunches of blooms and a chance to compete against THE BIG DAWGS at our show. Bloomquist Candy Corn



is a B-size, Formal Decorative bi-color orange with white tips. So handsome, Bloomquist Candy Corn attracts attention in any garden. And BQCC is really EASY to grow; it wants to grow. It will be the first to bloom for me this season and it was one of the last to bloom last December. What a LOOOOOONG growing season.



Please bring your extra tubers and plants to our tuber sale. Put up posters to advertise. Send out emails announcing our sale to ALL YOUR FRIENDS. Let people at work, at the library, at your supermarket, at the dentist, at your Pilates spot know. What their NEED for dahlias.

I will be in the Dell most Saturday mornings continuing to dig out clumps and beginning to plant new ones. Bring your questions or your curiosity between 10-noon. The last Saturday



in March found Lou, Pat, Sue, Deborah,



Paula, and Ameha all playing in the dirt at the Dell in glorious weather.

Yours in dirt,

Deborah

Photo credits: Baker, Dietz, Fischer, Harris, Hunter

Webmistress and Membership Queen: Deborah Joseph

Snail Mail Maven: Patricia Hunter