



**NEXT MEETING:** March 10, Program: Round Table discussion about planting, milk cartoning, sowing seeds, and using your ADS Classification Book. Please bring your 2020 ADS Classification Bible or sit next to someone who has. Who will bring tasty yummys to fuel avid dahlianeers?

## CAGE BUILDING ONE SNIP AT A TIME

Because gophers beset several DSC members last season at such a voracious and vicious rate, Tinnee agreed to lead a hands-on practicum about gopher cage building. Getting to the site early, Tinnee presciently cut several lengths of hardware cloth

with Cathy acting as her nimble “bricks” to

hold the metal down. The hardware cloth tends to spring up and scratch faces and hands, necessitating heavy weights or a willing Cathy to effectively anchor the punishing material in place. Tinnee recommends the 15 gauge ½” weave roll which comes in various lengths. The 2’ x 25’ roll costs @ \$30 and makes @18 cages depending on diameters. How big should your cage be? If you are planting new cuttings, the 10” cages suffice;



however, if you are planting large tubers, you might go 14" or 16" to contain the tuber growth. In these cases, Tinnee recommends you plant your tubers vertically rather than horizontally. The magic formula to accommodate your diameter is:  $D \times \text{Pi} + 2$ ".



This translates as Diameter (10, 11—up to 16") times 3.14, and then add 2" on to whatever that length is to accommodate the overlap.

Our crafters instinctually rolled the long lengths into tubes with 2" overlap; but many cinched their zip ties at the top and bottoms not anticipating that they'd have to cut 2" "gladiator" flaps at the bottom. So the zip ties secure the top and also 3" UP from the bottom of the hardware cloth tube. Once your wire tunnel is secure, cut flaps 4 squares or 2" up and fold into the center. Tin recommends the 18 gauge Aviation Snips which



advertise "cuts 8 miles of steel" and gives "10x Cut Life." They cost @ \$15. Now you need to cut a 5" x 5" bottom piece. Easy Peasy! Done!!!! How do you plant with these cages? Dig a

hole to accommodate the entire cage. Put the bottom piece down first! Yes, the detachable bottom piece goes into your planting hole FIRST. Allow 1"-1 1/2" to project above the surface level of your garden so ambitious but blind gophers might be thwarted



from climbing over the top. Then insert your whole cage over the bottom piece. Half fill it with dirt. Add your fertilizer, mycorrhizae, calcium nitrate, or whatever constitutes your

secret sauce, and then add your cutting or tuber. Fill in the rest. Erik testified, "I used this system on the Hillside and never had a tragedy last year." This elegant design also enables easy extraction. You just snip the 2 zip ties and unroll the cage flat exposing your lovely tuber mass. The cages can then be stacked flat for next season. Tinnee has used hers for 8 seasons now and they show no signs of rusting or corroding away. Deborah



brought in a commercially available gopher cage for comparison. These cost between \$12-16 each. They are made

from chicken wire, which lasts a far shorter spell. They often mangle developed tubers when you extract them. They are obnoxious to try to flatten out for storage. So don your big leather gloves and start snipping! Instructions [HERE](#).

## VIRTUE REWARDED: RAFFLE RESULTS

Devorah dumped all the raffle tickets earned by getting one's membership forms in by the end of January. The grand winner of the \$25 gift certificate to our Tuber Sale was Lola! She was delighted! The \$20 prize went to Lillian, with the \$15 award bequeathed upon our

Frank. Well done. But wait, the raffle wasn't over. Devi brought a whole load—23—

containers with gorgeous frogs already attached to be raffled off. Wow! Almost everyone who

attended won a new/old show container for the up coming season. Thank you, Devorah, for such amazing generosity and FUN. Everyone should take time to personally thank Devi for managing our membership demands. She reports that she's found someone who might help us put membership on line so we could



pay through PayPal directly on line and not have to print out forms, fill them out by hand, stamp an envelope and pop into snail mail. Wouldn't that be great!

## GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS

When there's a big box of Meyer lemons, you know Ron thoughtfully brought his citrus bounty for our group. Thank you to whoever brought the decadent Valentines Sees Candy. Lola you are so good by bringing a luscious fruit medley! We need healthy choices. What bright red and white Valentines cookies. Thanks to the rest of you unsung benefactors who donated goodies to the cage builders. Please, everyone, personally thank Lola for setting up the coffee/tea items and cleaning up our kitchen after the meeting. She is such a thoughtful unsung hero!

## MORE MUD MONTH DROOLING...



Colleen Mooney



**DUTCH BABY**



*GRANITE QUEEN*



*NEWAUKUM HONEY*

## **150 ANNIVERSARY OF GOLDEN GATE PARK**

To kick off celebrations, various clubs are meeting at the Polo Fields on Saturday, April 4 to be honored. You are invited! Then throughout the park various organizations will stage information booths. Erik would like to erect a table outside the Dell for that day from noon to 3 or 4 featuring a table with his triptych of DSC info, some tubers, and information about our TuberSale and membership. Who might be willing to sit at this table for a couple of those hours and educate the public? Please contact Erik: [EHLG@yahoo.com](mailto:EHLG@yahoo.com)

## **BUSY HANDS ARE HAPPY HANDS**

Tony and Christine gamely wrested the final 50 from the Warden's lovely back yard. Over the course of several dividing seminars Christine, Peter, Len, and Patricia prized tubers from their cages, rinsed the clumps, wielded the dividing Dremel,

**soaked tubers in Clorox baths, labeled**



**the wet roots, suffered exposed cuts and potted them all up in milk cartons or vermiculite. Whew!!!! Major effort to whittle down the pile in Deborah's driveway. Thanks for all the help and for the great company!**



What if they threw a party and everyone came? Great attendance at the Los Gatos PSW Conference meant that bloomerati hobnobbing spilled into 2 days! We met the newest member of DSC, Matthew Burriesci, the owner of Moonlit Gardens in Half Moon Bay. He and his partner aspire to an operation such as Kevin and Karen used to run. Attendees appreciated the mixed format: single talks, demonstrations, panels, and at the very end, business. Our Deborah kicked things off with a Powerpoint tour of how she maximizes her wee Maus Haus to produce so many early milk cartooned dahlia plants. Deborah sparked a discussion about “secret sauce,” what we add in making cuttings or planting to get that silly millimeter of margin over our competitors. Such a meme! Kristine and Kevin answered questions about making cuttings. Kristine suggested adding “washed play sand” (@ \$5 for 50 pounds) to potting medium. Kevin recommended a cheap meat thermometer to stick into soil to make sure the temperature is over 60 but below 80 degrees.

KATHY SANTOS, a professional problem solver, strongly urged cover crops of bull or fava beans calling them “green manure.” AgroThrive, a drench from Watsonville, ([agrothrive.com](http://agrothrive.com) \$30 per gallon) “digests” fish guts and corn mash; potentially gagifying, it smells pleasantly like soy sauce. This not-so-secret sauce



provides many micronutrients. Most gardens need NITROGEN not phosphorus or potassium. Phosphorus, encouraging root growth and blooming and Potassium assisting in cell growth, water movement in cells and buffering against disease and environmental distress, stay in the dirt a long time. Nitrogen does not; it's volatile; it disperses into the air. Other necessary micronutrients are: iron-lack thereof indicated by chlorosis, leaf yellowing; manganese assists with photosynthesis; molybdenum helps reduce nitrates to usable forms; and mycorrhizae colonize dahlia roots for mutually beneficial benefits. Kathy donated sample size AgroThrive for all the goodie bags and held a mini raffle for 9 more wonderful amendments.

**PSW DAHLIA COMPETITIONS SLICED AND DICED:** Louise Hendrickson collected the results from 7 dahlia shows in California last year to produce 3 lists: [Top 20](#), [Winners by Size](#), and [Courts of Honor](#). Click on each for links. The Top 6 overall winners were: 1. Valley Porcupine 2. Eden Benary 3. AC Ben 4. Lo-Redeye 4. Maks Lori Jean 5. Mary's Jomanda 6. Mexico 6. Fancy Pants 6. Eden Talos. Winners by Size lists AA for example with the 7 AA winners in the 7 competitions of 2019. Use these lists to know what grows well in California and what WINS here.

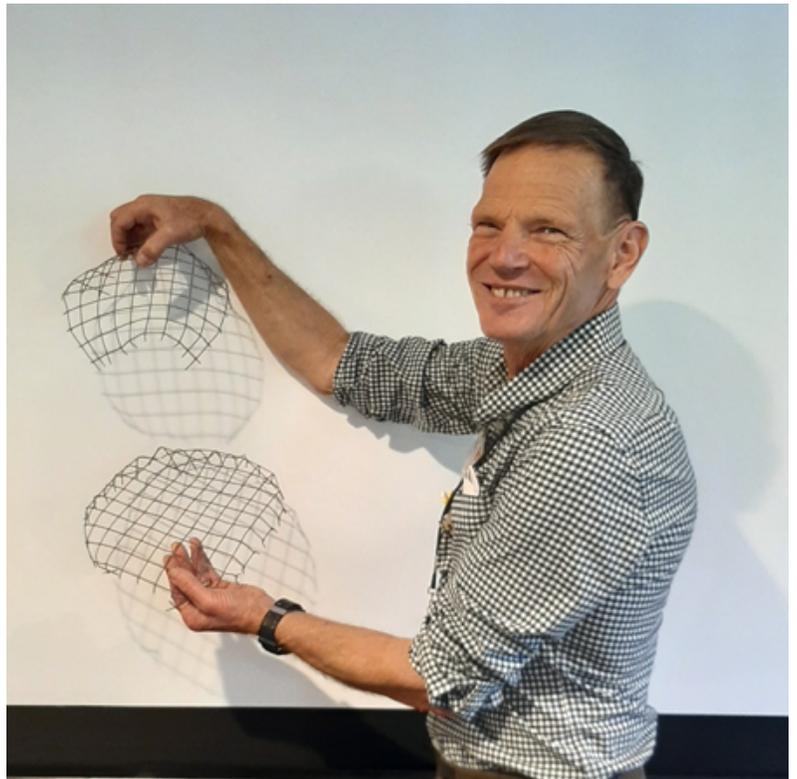
**HYBRIDIZERS PANEL:** Curtis, Kristine, John M and Lou shared their techniques for making new introductions. Curtis, who introduced the famous Verda, demonstrated his (in)famous capillary mat, a sheet of heavy felt which wicks moisture up from the bottom NOT the top. Each seed parent gets its own wee metal coral. Curtis said he loved the “thrill and





dimension” of hybridizing. Kristine uses organza bags to cover the spent blooms she’s hand pollinated with tiny water color brushes to protect them from further busy bees’ contamination. Lou likes Aitara Caress, Hollyhill Electra and Eden Barbarosa as seed parents; Kristine says Elma Elizabeth produced KA’s Cloud; Curtis prefers using varieties that make a lot of seed such as Clearview Daniel and Kenora Sunset. John plants like dahlias near each other to potentially cross-pollinate each other.

**TRANSPORTATION TIPS:** Lou and Ken shared some of their favorite ways to bring their amazing blooms to the show safely. Ken demonstrated how to use two crowns of chicken wire to transform a 5-gallon bucket. Lou sticks various sized pvc pipes into a bin to hold his beauties. Both agree that oasis holds the wee mignons and open centered well en route.



**MAXIMIZING THE BIG ONES:** Roy urged, “Like children, AA’s

need to be fed often and much.”

Ken demonstrated “neck stretchers”

which he adheres to the living

bloom when it first produces a bud.

He attaches it using pipe cleaners.

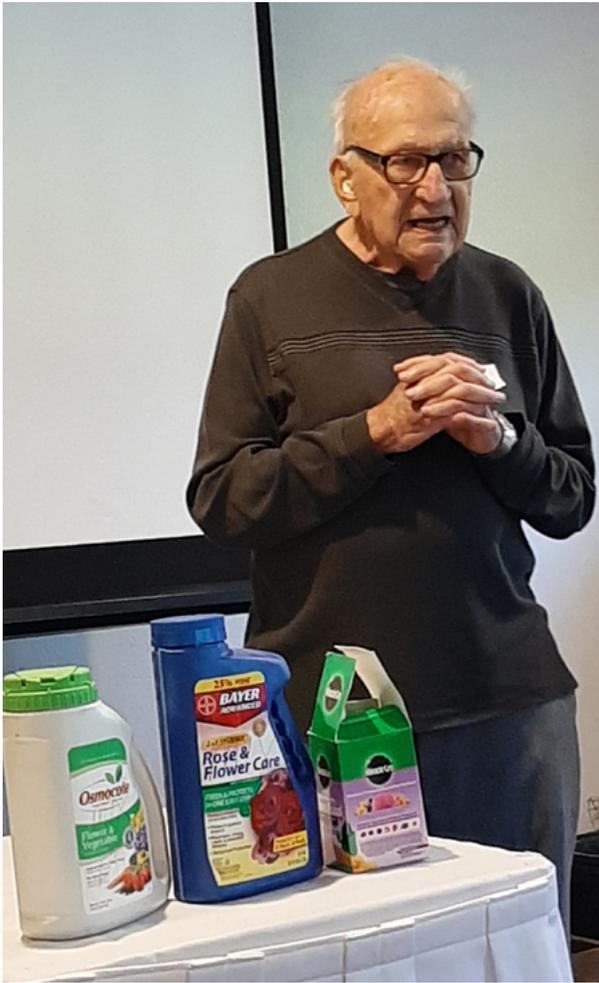
Both Ken and Roy agreed that they

limit each plant to only 4 laterals, so

that each plant might only produce 4

blooms in the entire season—but

such **BIG BLOOMS!**



**DANCING ARRANGEMENTS:**

A performance artist creating

without a safety net, Lou

dazzled us with the seeming

simplicity of both a tall and

and Asian arrangements—

using mums and dubious

greenery. Wow!



**BANQUET AND BOUNTY:** During a lovely dinner, we ran about nabbing raffle items from the Green Room, the Blue Table, the Brown Table and the Booze Table. So many wonderful items including boxes of frogged containers from the late and loved Dean Barns, shiny silver wedding present trays from Ken and Marilyn, and memorable wines from Silverado Winery donated by our Pat. There we many many dahlia tuber gift certificates including Lobaugh's, Freys, Swan Island, and Cooks. Great pouches of tubers and cuttings as well as orchids, carnations and cymbidiums were snapped up by avid gardeners. Wow! Such a great finale to an excellent convention.

### Herewith is a Calendar of Dahlia Events

SOCIETY	FLOWER OF THE YEAR	TUBER SALE	SHOW
San Leandro Dahlia Society	Clearview Daniel and Alpen Diamond	April 25th Root Park San Leandro	
Monterey Bay Dahlia Society	Valley Porcupine and Becca D	April 4 Deer Park Shopping Cntr 783 Rio Del Mar Blvd. Aptos	Aug 22-23 Museum of Art and History, Santa Cruz
Dahlia Society of California	Kenora Jubilee and Stillwater Plum	April 18 Auditorium 9th and Lincoln, San Francisco 9:30 am	Aug 22-23 Museum of Art and History, Santa Cruz
National Show			Sept. 10-14, Wenatchee, WA
San Luis Obispo County Fair			July 22 , Mid-State Fairgrounds, 2198 Riverside Ave., Paso Robles, CA
The San Luis Obispo Country Farm Bureau			Wednesday July 22, Mid-State Fairgrounds 2198 Riverside Ave.,Paso Robles,

## MARCHING INTO MARCH

Last chance to add chicken manure, a “hot” additive, to your patch without worrying that it might singe the new wee roots of your dahlias in April. Phil dumps 30 bags for 140 plants. Weed Weed Weed. Extirpate those leechers of your plot’s nutrients. Get them out so they don’t breed MORE. Set your gopher cages in early. This is arduous work; it may take several days. Getting them in early, gives the soil a chance to settle and gives you a chance to recharge your personal batteries so you can plant with extra energy in April. Stake out your section. Lou has his stakes in way before April first; he lines them up in military precision. Sue and I have been flinging coffee grounds around. Check with your local coffee shop to see if they will save you their redolent waste. You may have to bring them a container and promise to collect it before closing. My Bernal Martha Brothers saves me half gallon milk cartons.

**THE MILK CARTON TECHNIQUE:** I have begun putting tubers in potting mix into quart and half gallon milk cartons. They get stacked up in my loft, which is the warmest spot in the Maus Haus. I check once a week to see who’s sprouted. Most dahlia tubers prefer 63-67 degrees or more to germinate. Some places in the Bay Area this never happens long enough. In my loft I can control temperature, moisture and pests. Once the green sprouts up 5-8” tall, the milk cartons go out on my front deck under a plastic “spinnaker.” Here they get plenty of sun, some air movement, but also some protection. They also get a chance to “harden off” or acclimate to overnight temperature fluctuations. Why go to all this trouble? I love dahlias! I want to see them bloom as soon as possible. The milk carton method gives them a jumpstart; by the time I plant my dahlias in April, they are already at least a foot tall, with a well established root

mass. They take off and bloom at least a month to 6 weeks earlier than if I'd just planted tubers in the cold ground. The other advantage of the Milk Carton Jump Start is that I **KNOW FOR SURE** that I am planting a viable, living plant. When you bury tubers in your patch, you hope for ideal conditions: no rain, gentle warmth, warm nights, no gophers, no wild temperature fluctuations and no biting-sucking-munching bugs: all of



which could cancel out your poor dahlia before it ever gets going. Now I **ONLY** plant well-established green dahlias. Another way of jumpstarting dahlias is to build a cold frame either up against the wall of a structure or freestanding. Here is a simple but effective one the Kevin Eschelmann has erected at Wolfe Lane.

Check out [Summer Dreams Farms Dahlia Tuber and Splitting guide](#). It delineates what's a neck, crown, tuber, eye and where to split.

Yours in dirt,

*Deborah*

Photo credits: Cassidy, Creekside, Davis, Dietz, Hardy, Kapp, Kneblewski

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