



NEXT MEETING: That's surely the big question. We don't know. We hope you will share some photos and stories of what you are doing dahlia-wise during these quarantine times.

TUBER SALE POSTPONED

The cutting team was asked not to return to the greenhouse mid-March. For the present, the remaining greenhouse crew have promised to keep what is there watered. Cross your fingers. Some early cuttings were potted up into 4x4's before that time, but so very few. We are all in discussion pondering our options. As soon as these plans have solidified, we'll send out a blast alerting all DSC members.

DAHLIA DIVIDING SEMINARS



In the old days, the old normal, Len and Patrice were able to come to Deborah's Maus Haus and practice dividing tuber clumps. They lopped stalks, sifted dirt, cleaned clumps, zzzzzd! her electric dremel, and popped individual tubers in 10% Clorox solutions. Now with the new



normal, we must depend on good YouTube videos for dividing tutorials. But—sing along with me—There's nothing like the real thing, baby!

THE MAIL WORKS!

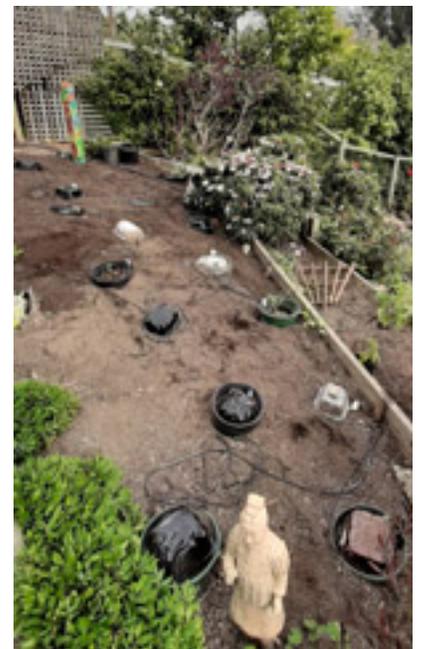
Yes, dahlias can still be shipped around the US. Paula just received her rooted cuttings from StoneHouse Dahlias. She delighted in their sturdy stems,



wild leaves, and robust roots. Paula has several dahlias sprouted which she had not dug up from last year. She puts cake and pie covers over them like mini greenhouses. In the week before LOCKDOWN, Paula taught master gardeners about dahlias with lots of show and tell props like tubers, cuttings, and secret sauce additives. Likewise, John M received a shipment from Stonehouse and has already potted them up. Phil reports that he opened 50+ clamshells from



Cowlitz and planted them all in gopher



cages. What are you doing???? Email dahlia.dietz@gmail.com
Pictures very much appreciated.

CORONA FANTASY ESCAPE

Here are a few more photos of gorgeous dahlias to enjoy as you shelter in place.



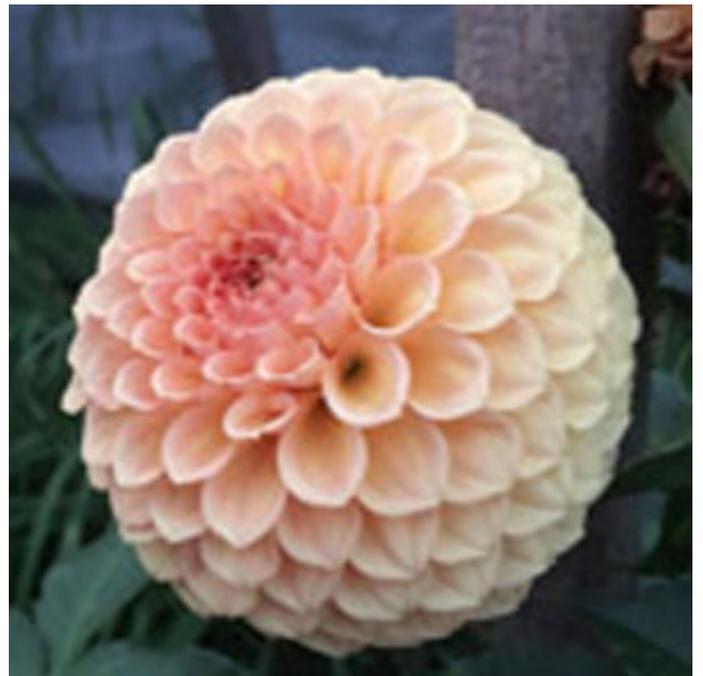
Brooks Shana



Foxy Lady



Gitty



Granite Kylie



Hans Auinga



Hart's Bonnie

ESL, ZOOM, AND DAHLIAS

Many schools continue using the group chat room app ZOOM. During more normal times, Deborah substitutes at an adult school, the American Academy of English. To augment one of the classes, Deborah used dahlia calendar photos and did an on-line interactive lesson on growing dahlias. Very fun. She invited them all to the Dahlia Dell when shelter in place is lifted.

SECRET EASTER BUNNY

Mike W in Napa suggested a sort of secret Santa scenario only with the Easter Bunny and no secrets. Communication and Community outreach is vitally important during this sequestration time. Let Deborah know if you're interested in participating or just do it on your own. Calling fellow DSCers is a very positive way of helping others and helping yourself at the same time. If you need some telephone numbers ask Devi or Deborah. Please try to call 2-3 of our DSC community every day or so. Find out if they have interests beyond dahlias:

sports teams, bowling, knitting, cooking, grand children, poetry????? Then share pertinent youtube videos, cartoons, recipes, whatever. **MAKE IT PERSONAL.** Try FaceTime or a ZoomRoom or Google Meeting where you can talk and see the other's face. So **REACH OUT** on your own or contact Devorah or Deborah for suggestions or telephone numbers or email addresses.

PROBLEM SOLVING VIA DAHLIA GROWING

Donna and I retired, sold our Marin home, and moved into a senior retirement community in Thousand Oaks, in 2014, near Los Angeles. It is called University Village at Thousand Oaks. It has 367 domiciles, 400 residents, and every activity imaginable. We only have sons. My wife and I took care of her parents and my parents and we were determined to spare our children having to take care of us in our last days. This facility has assisted living and skilled nursing on campus. In retirement language that is called Continued Care. So our last days will be taken care of on this campus.

One of the activities at UVTO is a community garden area. Raised beds,



raised 24 inches and 4 x 8 feet in size. Everything is grown here, all kinds of vegetables, every flower. When I arrived here 6 years ago, they let me have one 4 x 8 foot raised bed which allowed me to grow 18 full sized dahlias. Note my one raised bed with 18 stakes, all labelled, with a drip irrigation system. I

also asked permission to build a long 10 foot raised bed, seen on the right against the perimeter cyclone fence. Continued begging allowed me to place twelve 15 gallon pots against the inside of the fence, which are staked and labelled also. All contained tubers. Finally, in 2016, I asked permission to place



eighteen 25 gallon pots along the outside of the fence. I can grow 2 full sized dahlias in each 25 gallon pot. This allowed me to grow a total of 60-65 plants and enough blooms to share with our community. Each Monday, during the blooming season, which is from June 1 thru Halloween, I cut enough blooms to spread 13 bouquets throughout our facility. One for my wife, one for the reception desk, one for the skilled nursing desk, and one for the assisted living desk. The other 10 bouquets are smaller and I ask the nurses to give those to patients who seemed most depressed. 5 months, 20 Mondays, a total of 260 bouquets every year. I have had a lot of fun and I have become known as the Dahlia King on campus.

2018 was a terrible dahlia year for me. Despite placing 2 inch wide copper tape around the perimeter of all of my plants something was eating them. And it wasn't snails. It took some time to discover the problem. Our campus is 65 acres wide. It is in the shape of a giant doughnut. The 30 acres of "doughnut hole" was our permanent riparian habitat or greenbelt. It has

lots of trees and scrubs. The local fire department suddenly considered it a “fire danger” and ordered ownership to cut, trim, and plow. This displaced all of the animal habitat such as ground squirrels, rats, and raccoons, etc. They needed food and shelter and they found our garden area. In my case it was the delicious dahlia plants. The ground squirrels ate all of my plants to the ground!

No plants, no blooms. For 2 years I just grumbled. I then went across the street to Cal Lutheran University where they also have a garden. I spoke to the head gardener and he took me into his garden. He also had a perimeter cyclone fence and it was covered with poisoned ground squirrel traps. 150 of them. He told me that it took him 3 years before he could grow anything by diminishing the ground squirrel population. On our campus I heard many complaints of displaced rats eating the insulation off of automobile wiring costing \$5000 a car for repair.

Optimistic,
I went to
the internet
and found
EUREKA!!
Ultrasonic
squirrel
repellers.
These are
solar
powered –
necessary
because
our garden
area has no



electricity. These units have motion detectors. When motion is detected the units spring to life and bathe the immediate area with high intensity ultra sonic noise that drives critters away. I purchased 4 of these units, fastened them 12 feet apart on the cyclone fence nearest to my plants. My plants are located directly against the inside and outside of the fence. All of the units have replaceable rechargeable batteries. I have 18 25-gallon pots with chicken wire to discourage climbing. On the cyclone fence I have mounted 4 ultrasound squirrel repellents, approximately 12 feet apart. The window on top is the solar panel. The 2 green knobs of the bottom are sensitivity switches for detection and ultrasound broadcast; both are full on for maximum effect. Twin ultrasound speakers are above. The 3 white plastic lights are motion detectors. These units cost \$30 on Amazon.

The only way to test my arrangement is to plant dahlias and observe. I contacted Stonehouse Dahlias of Utah and ordered 62 rooted cuttings to obtain early blooms and to test the squirrel repellents as soon as possible. As of this writing I have planted 58 of the cuttings. They have been planted for 9 days and so far no squirrel evidence. However, I have decided that if this plan fails I will retire



from dahlia growing. Sad.....I am on edge a bit as I write this. I have lost over \$1000 in dahlia costs, fertilizer, etc. during the past 2 years. That is enough. Go repellers! Go!

Coronavirus: Since all of the residents of UVTO are over 80 we are in the highest risk category. Because of this we have been placed in social isolation in our units. No visitors allowed into the village. All residents are requested to limit leaving the campus. All activities are cancelled. The library is closed. The exercise facility is closed, the restaurant is closed. We fill our menu selections a day in advance and employees deliver the food to our units. Should we leave the campus when we return we must fill out a form denying contact with any sick people. Our temperature is taken. We residents realize that all of the precautions are for our benefit and are actively participating. We are secure as our campus is gated and guarded. I commend ownership for the huge effort put forth to isolate our campus and minimize our risks. Activity in the garden is promoted because it is solitary.

Writing about my dahlia growing problems was fun. I had forgotten some of my trials. Like the pursuit of any fancy lady the pleasure is always proportionate to the effort spent.

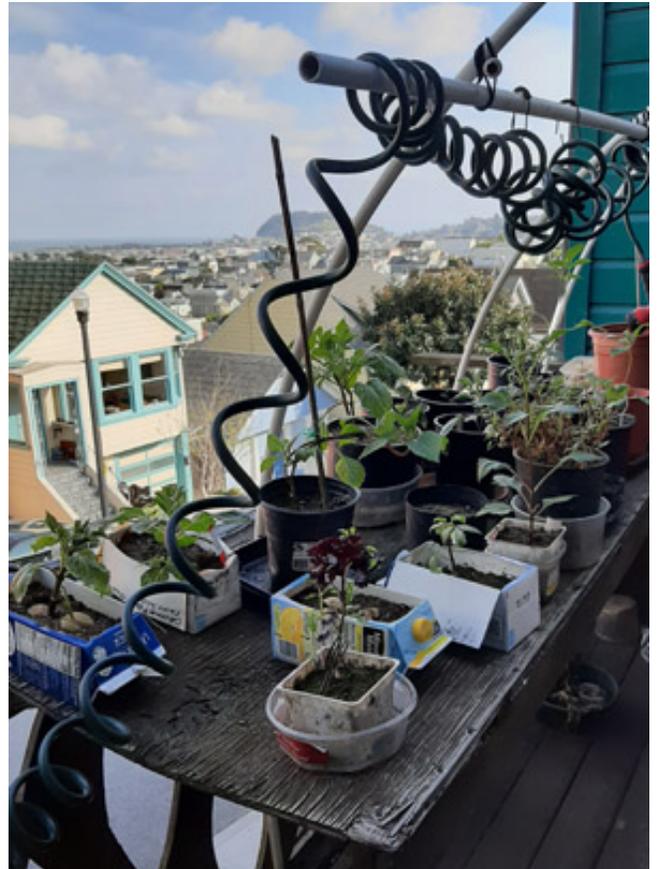
AWESOME APRIL

Weeding at the Dell, I noted that I have 105 germinated which I had not dug up from the previous season. Dahlias want TO GROW! I am going to have to go through and separate the clumps in the ground so as to leave but one or two thriving stems each. If you allow all the sprouts of a given over-wintered clump to grow, none of them will get adequate nutrients; all will be a little stunted. Instead, I will remove some

of the extras, pot them up in 4x4's and stash them in my green house. At some point I hope we will find a SAFE way to share/sell our extra beauties.

Erik and Nick weeded their tiers on the Hillside. Sue sunk all her gopher cages and is ready to plant. Patricia's tract exhibits nary a weed. Wow.

As the green sprouts push their way up through the dirt, marauders search for them and gnaw them down to nubbins. You can buy Sluggo Plus on line and get it delivered. The Plus covers not just snails and slugs but also earwigs. Earwigs can ravage your young plants in a single night of orgy eating. Take precautions NOW. I sprinkled a little 8-8-8 around my emerging dahlias so the rains can soak in these nutrients. The specific number doesn't matter; just try to keep all 3 numbers very similar.



Planting: what is in your secret sauce????? Chad bought me 25 pounds of Calcium Nitrate, never dreaming that we would be quarantined before the handover. So maybe I can add that later. I do have some balanced fertilizer so that's probably all I'll be able to add this year. Other goodies for a planting hole might be: mycorrhizae, bone meal, compost, worm castings and Bayers.

If you plant cuttings, make sure they get a little water every day for the first week to get them well established. Their hair-fine roots will die without moisture; as they grow, their roots will enlarge and be less vulnerable.

DO NOT WATER if you plant rootless tubers. Without roots, tubers will turn to mush with irrigation.



Tinnee recommends if you are planting a tuber in a gopher cage to plant it vertically with its eye up rather than horizontally as though it's lying on a bed. This way the tubers will have more space to develop through the season without having to poke through the wire mesh.

I came across this great solution for planting dahlias in a small space. What do you think?

Major thanks to Bonnie H for continuing to save half gallon milk cartons for me. Since the quarantine, my local Martha Brothers has not been able to do so but I still have dahlias to pot up.

Send me some of your dahlia stories with photos if possible. Let's share our innovations and coping skills with your fellow DSC friends. Please call around. It's been great to hear from so many people that they are ok so far.

Yours in dirt,

Deborah

Membership and layout genius: **Devorah Joseph**

Snail Mail Doyen: **Patricia Hunter**

Photo credits: **Davis, Dietz, Jaffee, Jensen, Joyce, Mani**

