



**NEXT MEETING!** Virtually! Just click on it at 7PM, June 9, to enter our Zoom Conference. Program: Virtual Round Table about planting, disbudding, deadheading, fertilizer, and logistics during Covid 19 times. This will be a wonderful opportunity to “see” each other and exchange ideas. Please provide your own snacks or libations as you deem appropriate.

Deborah Dietz is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Dahlias

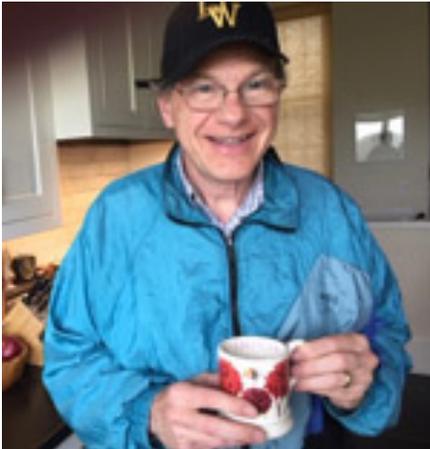
Time: Jun 9, 2020 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/73240851822?pwd=andHc3JkK2FIK1orNmNaby9oNStQQT09>

Meeting ID: 732 4085 1822

Password: 6NgYFv



## GRAB 'N' GO: E-TUBER SALE

Erik shares his impression:

“May First, the DSC’s first-ever online plant sale came to fruition with Friday AM pick-ups. These were scheduled every 10 min starting at 10 AM at Tinnee's, Devi's and Erik's homes. The day before, Thursday, Lou Paradise and Tinnee had

delivered carefully labelled boxes with the roughly 500 plants our various DCSers had purchased--through the clever on-line system set up by Devi Joseph."

Members were rewarded with tubers donated by Rachel Vasquez, who supplied many Cafe au Lait and Thomas Edisons. Liebe Patterson who turned over her trove of perfectly divided and labelled tubers to Pat Hunter--all showing nice eyes. Liebe had planned to bring large numbers of Ivanetti and Ginger Willo to the sale, and many of you will have a chance to grow them now.



All went according to plan! Stasia Obremsky was the first lucky customer at Erik's, having driven down from Healdsburg to pick up her cuttings, which included three "Eden Stasia"--the Lou Paradise introduction that her husband Dan Carroll had named in her honor for her birthday. Two community gardeners, Kien Tran from Hayes Valley and Kevin Eschleman from Bernal Heights came soon thereafter. We are hopeful that these public gardens will be "vectors" for dahlia enthusiasm letting other people see them grow and wanting to grow them themselves.

Alan Gregory drove down from Novato to resupply his garden, which had been ravaged by gophers last year. Over the winter he and Susie had put in amazing above ground planters of galvanized steel that should foil even the most intrepid varmint--see photos below.

Alan was so eager to get his plants he came 5 minutes early and waited around the corner, arriving as the second hand swept

the precise time. Erik says “They brought my wife and me a gift of fine English china dahlia mugs.”

## HOW MUCH TO WATER?

Whether you are germinating tubers or watering your whole patch, how much water is enough? Too much? Paula brought me four scenarios. A tuber with a wee rosy nub but no roots at all: should get a tablespoon of water every day or so until it begins to send down roots. Once you have nascent roots, if your container drains, you can keep the container moist but not wet. So how much water will depend on weather, ambient



temperature and drainage. When I use milk cartons in my loft, I do NOT put holes in the bottom because that gunk would ruin my carpets. So I have to be much more careful about the amount of water they get. Once your dahlia

bushes are up and thriving my rule is: very very wet and then very dry. Make them ask you for water. In San Francisco we might have 2-3 70+ degree days. I might water more; if we have June Gloom days on end, I might not water for up to 10 days. You need to figure out your garden's needs.

## HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

**WEED!** Weeds invite bugs; bugs eat dahlias; repeat cycle endlessly. No fun. So before you have to pull out the **BIG GUNS** of pesticides, get rid of weeds.

Marilyn and Phil have laid down weed-suppression cloth to save their backs too much bending over. If you do this, make sure that your drippers seed under the cloth and not on top of it. **DO NOT** use Roundup or their ilk; they will kill your



dahlias, too. Whilst Tony planted dahlias, Ens has enjoyed all the roses blooming in their back yard. Bob P helped Jon Dietz refill his Dahlia Dome in SoCal. Jon reports that he keeps his spritzer bottle of “cocktail” handy to spritz whenever he strolls through. John Mani updates us on his squirrel predicament: “When I planted my dahlia cuttings from Stonehouse Dahlias on March 23, 2020 I was afraid the ground squirrels would eat

them as they have for the past 2 years. I added 4 solar powered, battery driven, ultrasound squirrel repellents and crossed my fingers. Well, 2 months have passed and so far, no



squirrel problems. The cuttings are growing just fine with lots of buds. I now spray, once a week, with “Schultz Bloom Plus”, 10-54-10 with micronutrients, to encourage the buds to grow. So far so good.

Look at the growth in two months. We are so lucky. We have no Covid19 contact so far in our 500 resident campus.

Go ground squirrel repellents!”

John Mani, At University Village at  
+Thousand Oaks, Ca



## LUCAS VALLEY GOPHER SOLUTION

Here is Sue Gregory telling how their family got into dahlias and tried to thwart rapacious gophers:

“Having lived in the city forever, we made the move to San Rafael 3 years ago and we now live on the edge of the Marin Open Space, which feels like we are much further away than northern Marin, more like Sonoma. The climate was definitely an attraction! It’s hot (can be too hot!) in the day during the summer and most evenings we get the cooling influence of the fog wind but without the fog. It can get pretty cold in the winter so we may try growing peonies, our favorite flower after dahlia’s :)

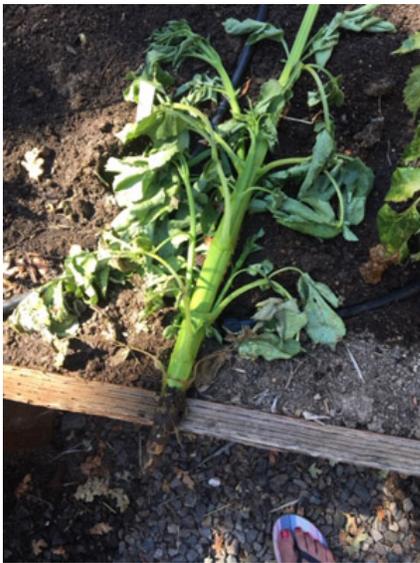
We were very lucky to inherit a few raised wooden beds for veggies. We pottered around for the first 2 summers here growing the usual suspects (mostly tomatoes, very successfully the first year and very unsuccessfully the 2nd, inexplicably!).

**Our 3rd summer, we were launched with great speed and efficiency on our new gardening voyage thanks to our great friend Erik who arrived one morning in mid May with a wagon load of dahlia plants and tubers and we were put to work toiling in the hot sun in the old wooden beds! We were now on a dahlia 101 crash course!**



**The Marin Municipal Water District was put on alert to open up the flood gates for Lucas Valley and we now had a wonderful summer ahead of**

**us with bountiful weekly arrangements of beautiful dahlias, all colors shapes and sizes! Our dahlia consultant, Erik, taught us the correct management of each plant and although some of them got mildew, and we missed pinching the side shoots off a few leaving only the middle finger (!) they still put out lots of blooms all summer.**

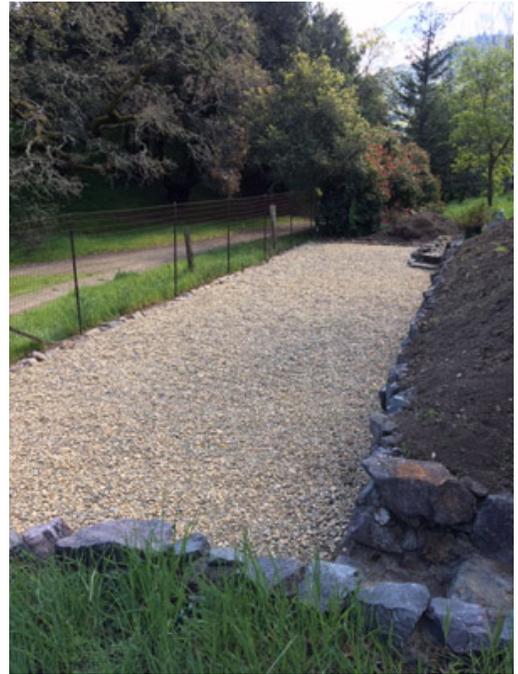


**Until that is ..... catastrophe! An enemy breach! The beds were fatigued, the wood and wire had deteriorated enough such that**

**word got out in the gopher community and one by one the dahlias fell. Including our top performer, "Louise". The last straw! So we spent a sorry afternoon in October 2019 trying to salvage what was left of the tubers, bagging them up in brown paper bags and storing what we had left in the garage over the winter.**

**Fast forward to winter 2020 - pre Covid-19.**

We ripped out all the wooden beds, saved the soil which had been replaced last year, and after some deliberation decided to replace them with galvanized steel troughs from a ranch supply store in Santa Rosa rather than expensive redwood or pressure treated wood, which is not great for veggies. We graded the area, weed cloth and 2" gravel were laid as a foundation, then the troughs were set in place. Each trough had small drainage holes drilled in the bottom mindful of course to exclude any gopher burrowing, and a layer of gravel was laid in the bottom before filling with soil



and compost. Drip irrigation was laid out in each one. The dimensions for troughs are pretty standard, 8ft rounds and 8ft x 3ft oblongs. (One can also buy smaller versions of each fyi.) All this was completed at the exact time SIP(Shelter In Place) took effect. We were SO lucky!

We then held our breath, crossing fingers that the dahlia sale would still take place as we were now ready for our 2nd season! We weren't disappointed and thanks to the herculean efforts of the Society's volunteers we were able to plant 15 new dahlias along with a handful of survivors from the gopher massacre in to both the 8 ft rounds.



**May 15th : So far we have no casualties..... every one of the plants looks healthy and ready for some warmth after a few more rainy days and we even have signs of life from 4 of the 6 survivors (although we have absolutely no idea what they are as by mistake threw out the labels!)**

**We have some tubers in milk cartons as “reserves” and will find a spot for them in pots if no vacancies in the troughs arise!**

## **THIS LITTLE WAGON OF MINE**

**Mayor London Breed decided that closing JFK Drive in Golden Gate Park would cut down the number of people congregating. Who knows if it worked? A LOT of people still come every day, lay out their blankets, space out picnics with friends, toss Frisbees to dogs, rollerblade, sunbathe, and wander around. The Dell has become the go-to spot to teach youngsters how to ride bikes. This Vehicle Ban means that Dellians can no longer drive their dahliamobiles full of gear to the Dell. Instead each must somehow schlep their shovels, rakes, fertilizer, labels, string, plants, trowels, gloves, aprons, and stakes from their cars parked outside the cordoned off area. Tinnee uses her Show Cart. She’s holding a bag of super potting soil from Costco. Deborah’s friend Jan, who runs a day-care center, emailed all her “alumnae” and secured the loan of a little red wagon for the duration. Pat went on-line and bought a deluxe roller. Who knows how long these desperate measures will be needed. Lou mans an upright dolly to transport his hose**



equipment. Deborah reports 10 dahlias blooming in her section. Lou's producing precocious blooms on 3-6. Erik employs his gigantic Sherpa, Nicholas.

## JUNE IS BUSTING OUT ALL OVER!

So great to see happy plants, major buds and even first blooms now. I still have 12 spots to fill and just waiting for them to get big enough in the green house or on my protected deck before I expose them in the Big World of the Dell. So far, 16 have begun blooming including vigorous Lakeview Glows, Sandia Brocade, Hollyhill



Ripple, Hollyhill Exotica and jaunty BJ's Rival. Elvira is already a blooming hedge! Pat's Lo-Blush explodes with teensy flowers.



Such an exciting time!

**PINCH OUT:** Do you pinch out? Also called stopping, this is where you take the growing tip, any buds and the first set of leaves and snip them all off below that first pair of leaves. I usually wait until there's a first bud and remove everything down to the next set of leaves. This allows all the energy that would have gone into a potentially crummy first bloom to be used to establish better roots. This also gives you a bushier plant than a tall, skinnier one. There are good illustrations and photos of this process in our June 2018 newsletter. Also LOTS of YouTube videos.

**DISBUD:** This is where you allow only ONE bloom per set of leaves. Depending on the plant and the particular flower, you may have to snap off 1-2-or even 3 side buds. By doing so, your

remaining dahlia is taller, bigger and stronger. The sooner you can safely remove these little side budettes, the bigger the remaining bloom will be.

**DEADHEAD:** It is **VERY IMPORTANT** where you cut off your spent flower. Always cut down to **NEW GROWTH**. So if you have previously disbudded correctly, then you look below the framing side leaves and check out where the next set of flowers are coming from. Cut as close to their emergence as possible. If you do this correctly, you should have fresh happy dahlias through Thanksgiving. If you don't, you'll be lucky to have decent blooms through September.

**SPENT BLOOM/POPPED CENTER:** When should you nip off the old flower? If the variety is a "fully double" or one that you do **NOT** see the pollen for a long time, then you want to remove the glorious head **BEFORE** it starts dropping petals all over the plant. Dropped petals can breed decay and lure slimy bugs, both of which are good to avoid. Popped center means that the pollen starts showing. Were this show time, a popped center would signal that the peak of the bloom is over and would disqualify it. For an open-centered dahlia, such as a collarette or an orchette, snip when the first petal or two drop off. When you deadhead correctly, you release a hormone in your plant to make more blooms because the breeding opportunity of seeds has been thwarted. This is great! The more you cut (properly) the more flowers your dahlia plant produces.

**COCKTAIL TIME:** In this era of Covid 19 we may all be tipping a bit more than normal, but these are libations for our plants, not for **YOU**.

Formula for a gallon of water:

4 TBL spoons Stylet oil (have to get on the internet. Lasts for years.)

**2 tsp dishwashing soap (not detergent)  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 TBL liquid fertilizer  
2 TBL whole milk**

**Spray this on the leaves of your plants after the sun has left your patch. The baking soda subtly changes the PH which makes mildew and bugs unhappy. The Stylet oil is prophylactic for mildew; the soap is a “sticker” to keep the whole magillah on the leaves and not the dirt. Maggie found some**

**green magic on Amazon for \$12. I saw Lou spraying with a**

**Miracle grow formula. This time of year, I recommend a fertilizer with a high first number and medium second and third numbers 15-9-9 or thereabouts. By the middle of July, I switch to SuperBloom which has a low N, and monstrous P, and an adequate K - 10-45-18 or**

**thereabouts. I also keep a smaller spray bottle with the same cocktail to which I add a little Captain Jack’s Dead Bug, which is basically Spinosad, a bacterium which stymies critters that chew your leaves and petals. I only use this on problem areas. The first rule on Integrated Pest Management is to try to do the least intervention needed to accomplish the results you want. Mike Schelp surprised me with 2 gallons of compost tea which is only good for max 8 hours after brewing. He swiftly drove it from its vat in Half Moon Bay up to GG Park so I was able to spray compost tea on all my plants that was barely 2 hours old.**





**Purportedly this coats the leaves with a thin armor of living biota. I swear I saw a difference the next day????**

**SATURDAY STROLL BYS: Because vehicles are banned in GG Park now, it's been amazing to see so many dahlia friends stopping by the Dell.**



**John**

**Phan and James paused on their long run to consult on my irrigation system. Peter and his wife, Lee, picked up a few plants and promised to remedy the water problem with some homework. Peter patched things up quite professionally. Thank you! Jerry Pollen reported on his household's Covid routines. Christine brought by some potted overstock dahlias, TP and handi wipes! Loren surprised Pat and me with home-grown gorgeous golden beets; they tasted even better than they looked! I try to tend my plot between 10 AM and Noon on Saturday mornings, so if you have any questions, that's a good time to see techniques in action. And BTW, I still**



have some plants available if you have holes left in your dahlia garden.

Yours in dirt,

*Deborah*

Photo credits: Dietz, Gaensler, Gregory, Jaffe, Lee

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PS: Mark Oldenkamp just announced that the Portland Dahlia Society has added more tubers to its on-line dahlia sale. Check out: <https://portland-dahlia-society.myshopify.com/>

