

Dahlia Society  
of California

# *Dahlia Society of California Newsletter*

*March 2021*



**NEXT MEETING:** March 9 at 7:00 PM via Zoom. Here is our link:

Topic: My Meeting

Time: Mar 9, 2021 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81272933995?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81272933995?pwd=aVAXSldrQnQxMGNCOHIFY3FPMUtFUT09)

[pwd=aVAXSldrQnQxMGNCOHIFY3FPMUtFUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81272933995?pwd=aVAXSldrQnQxMGNCOHIFY3FPMUtFUT09)

It was great to see so many new faces during our February Zoom. Tara pointed out that [WAYFAIR.COM](https://www.wayfair.com) has amazing deals of all kinds of greenhouses. Check them out! Peggy invited us to participate in the Oregon zoom presentation April 13.

Dazzling Dahlias

Oregon Gardeners: Level Up Series

[Master Gardeners OSU/Polk County](#), [Jackson County Master Gardener Association Oregon](#)

Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM PDT

<https://fb.me/e/4QdmHRWAX>

## **VOLES?**

Voles are like moles or gophers. They crawl underground. The good news is they do not gnaw on stalks. The bad news is that their tunnels expose the roots to air, not nutritious soil, thus suffocating them. Moreover, vole tunnels are notorious for

sending precious water away from where you want it and towards more undesirable spots. Grrrr. What to do? Vole traps are like gopher traps but a bit smaller. Castor oil down the holes could poison some. John Morton suggests using metal rebar for your stakes and attaching venetian blind labels with strings that will clink and sing in the breeze. This sound or vibration seems to irritate voles and they go elsewhere. We once had a Ph.D. vole in the teardrop at the Dahlia Dell; it defied all our murderous attempts and blithely built an enterprising subway system below our plants. We finally just stomped HARD to collapse the tunnels whenever we spotted slightly upraised dirt trails. This saved our plants even whilst it played havoc with orderly watering procedures.

## REMARKABLE POSSIBILITIES

Marvel over another batch of dahlia photos saved from 2020.



***AC OUTLANDER***



***AC ROW'S END***



**ALLEN'S PINK TREASURE**



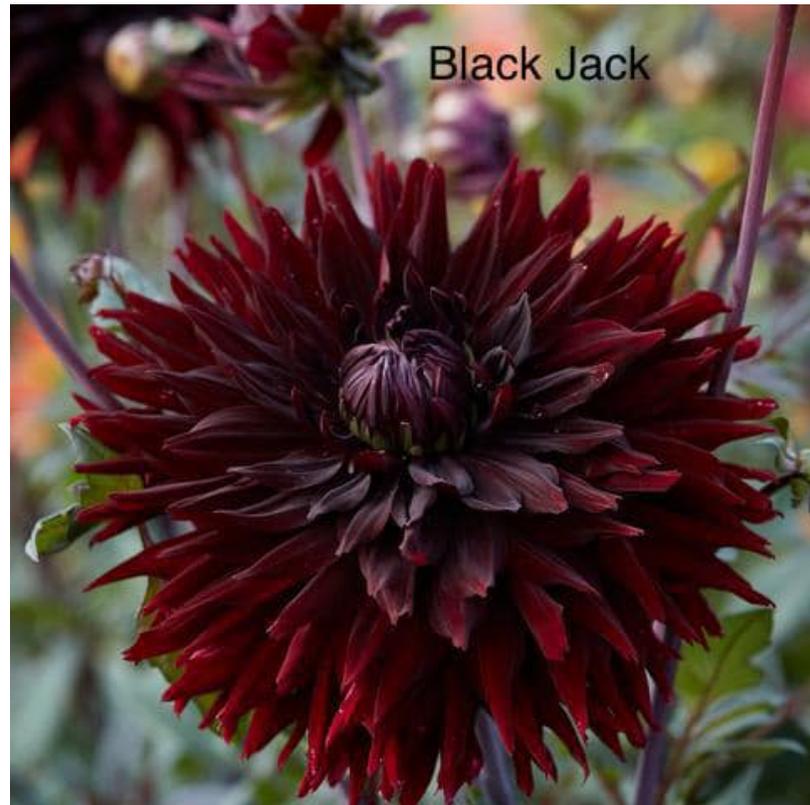
**APELSINI SNIEGA**

Avoca Amanda



SCD

Barbara B  
by SCD



Black Jack

**BARBARRY D'AMOUR**



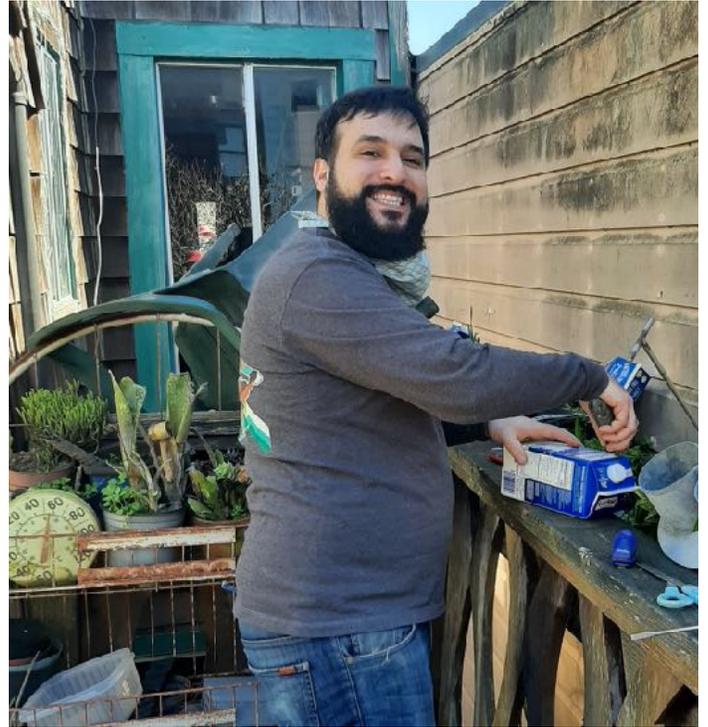
***HOLLYHILL GOLD RUSH***



***RAEANN'S POLLUX***

## ALL DECKED OUT

How to celebrate a glorious 73 degree sunny day in early February??? How about a dividing lesson on the Maus Haus deck? Python programmer Michael immediately set about slashing a huge bag of milk cartons they brought. Lillian potted up



processed tubers from the day before by filling a milk carton a third full with potting soil, inserting

sulfured tubers, and finally covering them. Lillian proffered a clump of tubers from her garden to practice dividing—what a whopper! Lillian's second year gigantic clump daunted her. Deborah showed how with these ungainly snarly root masses, sometimes the best way to start is a knife through the heart. Lillian's new killer knife rent the conglomeration into more manageable thirds. Although properly socially distanced, it felt very civilized to have company beyond immediate family.

## WHAT ARE THE BEST DAHLIAS FOR YOUR PLOT?

Alas, we only have so much space and so much energy so we have to be judicious about which dahlias we grow. The ADS

Classification Book lets you know which were winners in 2019. The ADS Website lists the 2019 FABULOUS FIFTY, those cultivars which won 50 blue or higher awards in 2019. The BEST indicator for our area are the compilations of winners Karen Zydner sliced and diced in the March 2020 Dahlia Society of California newsletter. This lists our top 50 varieties in California. It also breaks it down to which are the top AA, A, B, ST etc. These obviously thrive in our state.

## PATENTED DAHLIAS?

Yes, certain varieties and even whole families of dahlias have proprietorial patents. Law prohibits the propagation of the Mystic collection of dark foliage varieties and the Karma series. These are NOT genetically modified; they are patented to insure fair return on breeding investment. Most of the dahlias in ADS competitions are NOT patented. Hollyhill, Kenora, Bloomquist, Sandia, Accent (AC), and KA's breed for the love of the bloom. You can safely split these clumps, take cuttings, and share with your similarly addicted friends.

## APOLOGY: MISTAKE

In February we reported that Louise Henriksen earned a second and a third prize in the 2020 ADS Photo Competition. Wrong! This lovely picture won BEST Darkroom Magic. Louise was too polite to request a correction; nevertheless, with hearty apology, CONGRATULATIONS, LOUISE!



## THRICE IS NICE

Sarah helped Deborah wrest the last of the Warden tubers from their potted dormitories. Deborah pried the final clumps out of almost impregnable, matted roots. Grrrr, despite a cold day, the labor produced a good sweat.



## WILL THERE BE A TUBER/PLANT SALE?

Glimmers of good news: Lou, Pat and Tinnee have been able to set up a few pot tubers in the greenhouse and have started a few cuttings. Alas, the emphasis is on few. They will keep us apprised as to their progress. We will probably do what we did last year: offer them to DSC members via email lists. DSC members will pre-pay on line. We will have 2-4 different pick

up sites with each purchaser assigned a specific 15-minute period for the hand-over. This requires tremendous organization from a few members for the greater good of all of us, so be sure to let them know how very much you appreciate their generosity of time and service. Moreover, San Leandro Dahlia Society will also hold a similar tuber/plant sale. San Leandro contact information will be in April's e-newsletter. Monterey says they will NOT have a sale this year, however, Becky Adams, [becadams5678@gmail.com](mailto:becadams5678@gmail.com) will be selling some from her house in Soquel. The Portland Dahlia Society and the Puget Sound Dahlia Society will also have massive on-line sales. We are negotiating for DSC members to be able to buy tubers from them, too. Stay tuned!

## INTERNECENE SWAP SHOP

Tara has generously designed a Google Doc spread sheet for trading and/or buying tubers from DSC members. Contact her: [tara.donohue@corcorangl.com](mailto:tara.donohue@corcorangl.com)

Each person will be able to affix his/her available tubers to Tara's giant spread sheet. Your phone number and email address will facilitate trade negotiations.

## PLAYING WITH A FULL DECK

Karen fulfilled some of her mandatory volunteer hours for her City College Horticulture class by helping Deborah process dahlias on her sunny deck. Such good company and nimble fingers. So good that Karen reprised her role as tuber cleaner-offer and compost separator. Karen reports that her horticultural class has been concentrating on recognizing different



types of soil. Their first experiment was to dig a hole 6” deep, fill it with water and time how long it took to drain. Another fun one is to take a 12” bore of garden dirt, pop it in a glass jar add water and shake it up. When it settles note the various layers. Likewise, Tara (looking a bit like the Unibomber) came to learn to wield The Beast, Deborah’s electric Dremel oscillating tool which makes precision cuts into tuber masses. Tara divided several of her clumps and potted them up into milk cartons. Both “toured” the 4’x6’ greenhouse, and the germination loft. Check out Tara’s superb step-by-step PowerPoint presentation.

## SECOND SERVING OF EYE CANDY

These were sighted on various Dahlia forums, FaceBook, Pinterest and other social media last year.



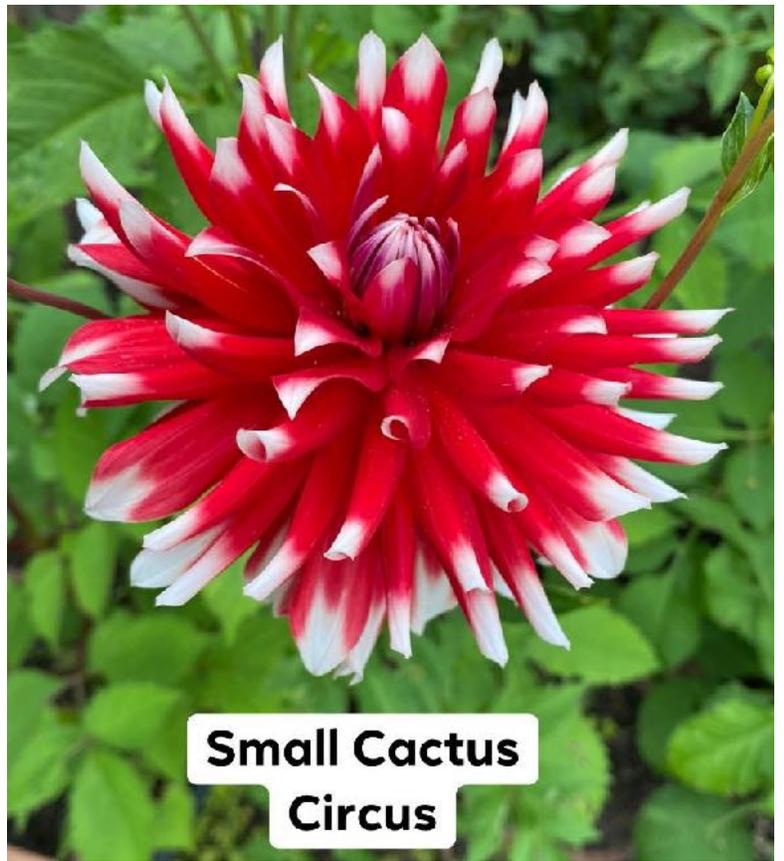
**CAITLIN'S JOY**



**CAMANO PEACH**



Catching Fire



Small Cactus  
Circus



*Felida Freckles*

*by SCD*



**GLAMOUR GIRL**



**Hy Trio**



[iLoveDahlia.com](http://iLoveDahlia.com)

**JOWEY MIRELLE**



***KEN'S RARITY***



**Large Decorative  
Kotara**



***HOLLYHILL TIGER***

## DELL DOINGS

It's been wonderful taking advantage of the glorious February sunshine. Pat is hand weeding her entire patch. Yowza! Nick and his pal pulled some of Tinnee's green interlopers. Sue has not only weeded, but re-sunk all her gopher cages awaiting early April tubers and cuttings. Loren has kindly dropped off, milk cartons, raspberry and sorrel plants and even more venetian blinds. After



falling from his roof and breaking most of the bones in his body, Soc defied medical expectation and survived. When told he'd never walk again, Soc answered the challenge with hours upon hours of physical therapy. The last weekend in February, Soc WALKED all the way from the Aids Memorial Garden clear to the Dell for a lovely

visit. **WOW! Pennhill Watermelon** blew us all away by producing a 7 ½" bloom at the end of February! Crazy!



## MARCHING INTO MARCH

By the end of March you may be delighted by some of your dormant dahlias waking up and sending out little green harbingers of another great season of blooms. Last year by March 12, I had 56 up at the Dell—these were clumps I'd left in the ground. As of Feb. 28, there were 5 up in the Dell, 4 of which were the inimitable Elvira. Of the 30 1-gallon pots, 5 evinced sprouts. These wee green sprigs are quite vulnerable to all kinds of munching predators. So if you have pots over clumps left in your plot, you should check underneath every few days: you might be surprised! I noticed Sluggo Plus at Costco for \$28, still expensive, but less than at other places. Sluggo Plus works against slugs and snails AND earwigs. Earwigs can utterly devastate emerging dahlia shoots. They are voracious. They hide in detritus, hollow stems, and under pots in the day time and then creep out to feast throughout the dark night. Be pro-active!

**WAKE UP!** Mid March is the time to start waking up your stored tubers. I bring my boxes of vermiculited roots up from the cool depths of my garage to the warmer heights of my third floor loft. Most dahlia tubers will germinate in 62-65 degree sustained warmth. Usually the miniature and open centered varieties burst forth first; the AA's and friends take considerably longer. It often seems like the more expensive a tuber, the longer it takes. Maybe because the more recessive genes it takes to produce something really spectacular, the more difficult it is to keep alive? Erik's trick with recalcitrant tubers is to put them on a tray lined with newspapers. Each day place a damp towel over the top and leave on a top shelf of a warm, dark spot. Sue uses a technique which they used to use for pre-term neonate babies; she pops hers into her gas oven with just the pilot light on, yielding just enough heat to

rouse slumbering tubers, but not to cook them. Commercial growers use heating mats topped by trays of loose soil. Find the method that works for you. **DO NOT WATER tubers until there is GREEN.** Tubers have no roots; they **CANNOT** absorb water without roots. Giving rootless tubers water will cause the unhappy tubers to **ROT.** When you finally see signs of verdant life, begin with very very limited amounts of water. Maybe only a teaspoon in the beginning; work up to a tablespoon. By the time your milk carton or gallon pot is jammed with roots, you can increase the amount of water.



**WEED!** Can't say it enough. The more weeds you eradicate now, the fewer will clog your garden later and suck up precious nutrients available for your dahlias. Keep composting!!!

**FIELD DRESSING:** When you finally see new shoots from your sophomore dahlia clump, what will you do? If you leave the whole Meggilah in, many more hungry tubers will be competing for fewer nutrients than last year. You could pull the entire clump and use the greensprouts as indication of where to divide. This plan has the advantage that you could

subsequently add a bunch of fertilizer and compost to the entire area. Or you could try field dressing: splitting part of the clump off right in the ground and administering your “secret sauce” of additions to the remaining hole. This way you leave some of the tubers with all their fine roots undisturbed. Because it is so well established already, it may bloom earlier. The danger here is that you might leave **TOO MANY STEMS** which will result in an unwieldy bush and smaller blooms. Your choice.....

**SOPHOMORE CLUMPS:** Many of you have reported that you have humongous masses of tubers the result of growing undivided for two years in a row. These require a lot of time to divide carefully. However, you can cut corners by simply slicing through the biggest two stalks. This should result in 3-5 big chunks of root mass, all of which can be replanted with reasonably good results. Be bold!

**GREENHOUSE ACTIVITIES:** I have been able to take cuttings from my earliest cuttings!

This does a couple things: first, it halves the height of the original start so it still fits under my lights. This allows the roots to further establish themselves, so when they go to their garden home it will be “plug and Play.” Secondly, it creates a second cutting either to share with others or to act as back up. Where the cutting has been taken, two more stems will grow. It’s very early pinching out. I have also been



taking some of the tiniest tubers which would not survive the process of storing and popping them under lights in my



greenhouse. They are perfect mediums for transporting genetic content. They will make normal sized plants this season and normal sized tuber clumps in the fall.

**APIRCITY**: Definition: the warmth of winter sun, from 1623. These last few weeks I have cleaved to puddles of apircity, especially after bouts of rain or those cold cold periods when I basically

camped on “my Caribbean Island” (my elevated bed in my

heated bedroom—my Maus Haus’s only heated room). There is something about the warmth of sun in the midst of winter, no matter how wan or fleeting, that brings such special pleasure. Maybe it’s the psychological sap rising as spring pulls us out of winter gloom combined with the desire to break out of Covid self-enforced dark captivity. I don my floppy hat, grab a chair and eat lunch in the sun. Just that fleeting moment of basking in a lovely world elevates my mood. Try it!

Here is a lovely little slideshow on dividing tubers from Tara. Click here: <https://sfdahlias.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PP-dahlia-tuber-dividing-feb-2021.pdf>

Yours in dirt,

*Deborah*

Photo credits: Dietz, Donahue, Fisher, Gaensler, Joyce, Kelly, Ligtenberg, Llagas,

Marriott, Roper, Sanchez-Corea, Showcase Dahlias, Smith, Smity, Sturm, Thompson

Layout Genius and Membership Wrangler: Deborah

Snail Mail Benefactress: Patricia



**TAHOMA STELLER FELLER**

