

Dahlia Society
of California

Dahlia Society of California Newsletter

May 2021



NEXT MEETING: Topic: how to make sure your new plants get a good and safe start. Bring show and tell. Let us know from whom you've ordered dahlias and what results you've had. Send Deborah photos of your plot—planted or not to share over zoom. Dahlia.dietz@gmail.com

Time: May 11, 2021 07:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81830227219?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81830227219?pwd=cWVmRVdjbm92KysyUGdkR2hXOU5jZz09)

[pwd=cWVmRVdjbm92KysyUGdkR2hXOU5jZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81830227219?pwd=cWVmRVdjbm92KysyUGdkR2hXOU5jZz09)

DAHLIA ART

Last month on Zoom, Erik shared several cool dahlia features. The first is a book about flower arranging with some stunning dahlia arrangements. Secondly Yayoi Kusama opened her art/ botanical exhibition in New York and features dahlias from when she was a child and present. Yayoi Kusama's Highly





Anticipated New York Botanical Garden Exhibition Will Feature a Brand-New Outdoor Infinity Room

Thank you, Erik, for submitting these interesting items.



CHAD AND TOM NEWS UPDATE

The Chronicle has published a follow up article about our Chad and Tom and how they coped during the Covid Pandemic. Click here for the full article. The good news: Tom and Chad after 14 months apart are back together under the same roof and petting the same happy little dogs.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/local/article/The-pandemic-forced-this-Bay-Area-couple-to-spend-16107280.php>



LOCAL YOUTUBE STAR

Kristine Albrecht has been posting some great Instagram and youtube videos. Here is how she pre-starts her dahlia tubers.

<https://youtu.be/Acdr5sV0Uh0>

FROM LEN

Here is a continuum of my report on the Barn Owl house debris dissection:

At least 40 hours of time was consumed on the project. Picking through the mass of hair very meticulously appeared to have ferreted out every single skull and mandible. Yet, whenever I went back to what I had gone through with a different light angle or level of illumination I discovered that I was able to find a few more items I missed.

So, I decided to try one last measure before I just dumped the debris into the trash. I decided to pour it into a plastic tub into which I had added warm water and about 5% bleach.

I did this and let it soak for a few hours.

Going back to it to see what, if anything, had occurred, I saw that there was a thick frothy mass of hair on the surface of the water. I took a hand rake and scooped this out and flipped it into a cardboard box I intended to dispose of. Once I had accomplished this, I poured the remaining water into a Plastic tub over which I had placed a 1/8th inch hardware cloth. To my amazement it was full of many hundreds of bones - some of which were small mouse and a few vole mandible that had been overlooked in the original technique of looking for such in the furry mass.

Here is the final breakdown by creature identification.

Vole 634; Mouse 146;
Gopher 95; Bird 33;
Shrew 5; Mole 4; Rat 1
= 918 total number of
creatures.

So we can say that this is
what it took to raise the
5 Barn Owl chicks that
fledged from this house
in 2020.

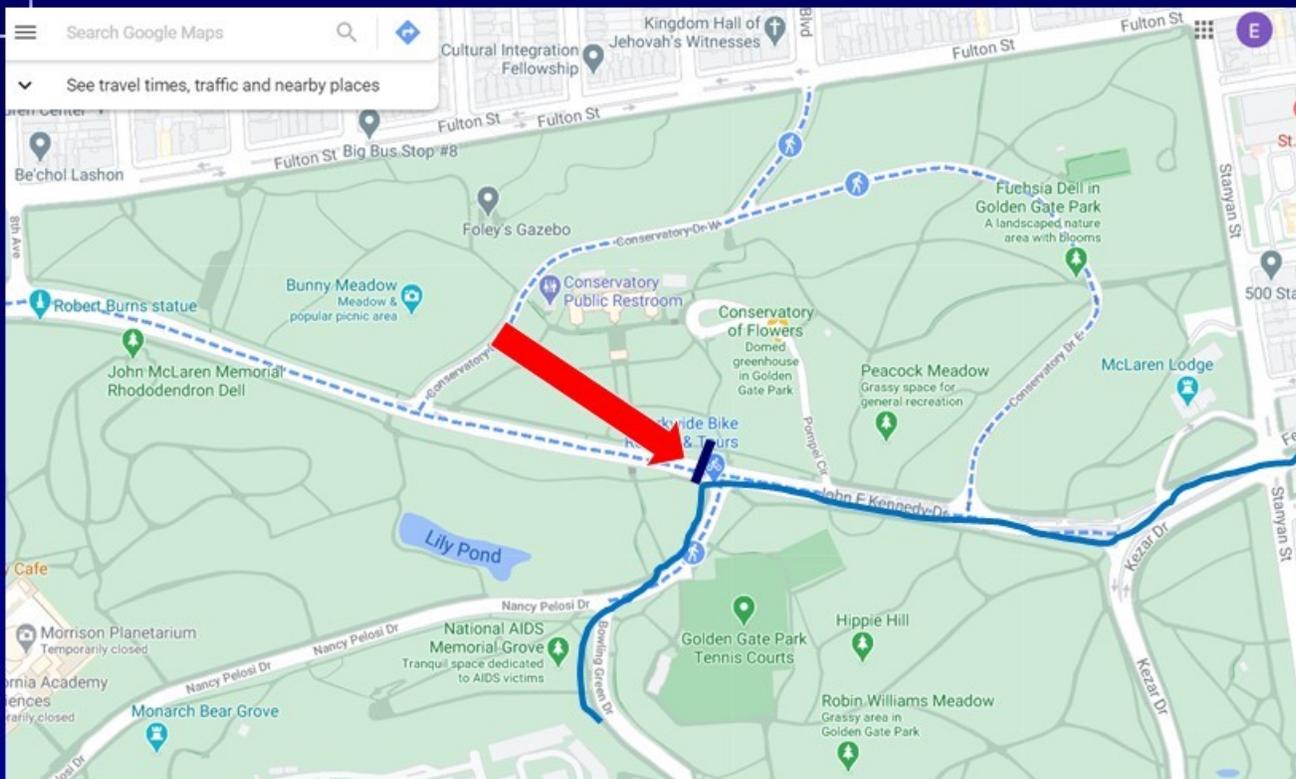
Thank you, Len, for the
follow-up on your great
Owl House clean out
investigation. Now we want to hear how well the “pellet power”
worked in your dahlia beds?



POLITICS & PROPOSALS

Devorah researched how we might present our dilemma to the Commissioners about access to the Dell with JFK closed to vehicles. Devorah got us a slot on the Commissioners' April agenda. Deborah waited 40 minutes on her cell to present the Pompeii Compromise: Allow vehicles to enter at the Stanyan Gate which would give them access to the Dell and to the new tennis courts. However, the barrier would stretch across JFK just after the tennis court turn off. Thus, bikers could still buzz about, tennis and paddleballers could still circulate and best of all, dahlia aficionados could drive into the Dell. Handicapped, elderly and other people who physically find it hard to park far off and trek all the way into the Dell would no longer be excluded.

Plan B: Potential site of semi-permanent barricade to traffic, Mon-Fri: This would allow access to Pompeii drive, and service and tour vehicles & groups to SFCOF. Traffic could flow from Kezar to new tennis courts. Parking could be prohibited or metered at "Ballpark rates" that would prevent abuse and raise revenue.



TONY AND DIRTY GIRLS

Tony bought dahlias from a new purveyor: Dirty Girls Flower Farm in Michigan. He had heard that the farther north the tubers come from, the faster they will germinate in a temperate climate like San Francisco. Intrigued by their name, he reports that their prices and choices were good; but their packaging was DELIGHTFUL. His tubers arrived in great condition

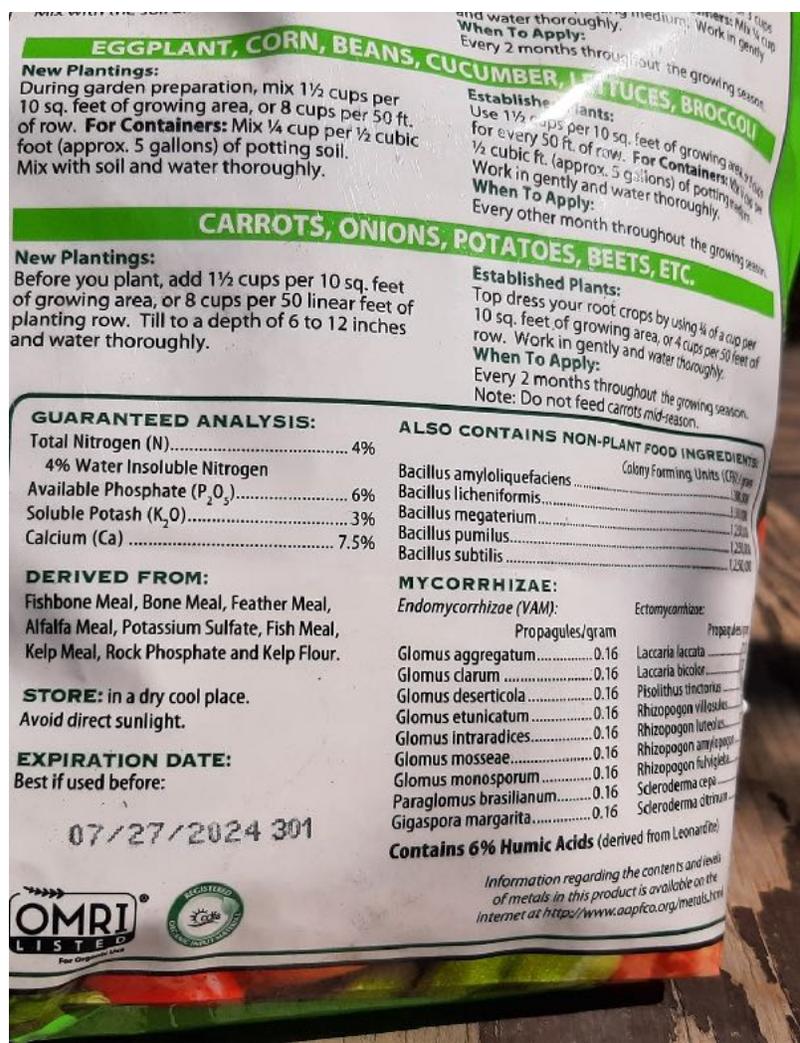


inside a snazzy box accompanied by candy and a cute note. Thanks, Tony, for sharing this fun surprise.

DELL DOINGS

Wow. A lot of activity. So many people getting their second jabs and feeling bolder. Sue planted all hers in gopher cages and many have responded to our great weather already. Pat is pleased that her sophomores (plants left in from their freshman year) poked up and are thriving, especially her Nick Sr. Lou masterminded his stakes like a military maneuver: straight, even, equidistant. He likes to plant a tuber on one side of the stake and a cutting on the other. Erik's sophomores thrive high on the hill. Tinnee tossed her weeds into compost pits and discovered many sophomores thriving in hiding. She pointed out several stages of lady bug larvae sunning themselves on the railroad ties holding up the hillside. Yay LadyBugs! Mui hand waters all 110 plants in Deborah's section PLUS all the gallon pot roots from last year. Such tremendous help. Weeds should be very scared of Lisa; she's a weeding machine! Loren brought by some Dr. Earth "tomato" fertilizer with lots of bacteria and mycorrhizae to check out. Home Depot and Lowes have it for @\$10 a bag. Dear, but you don't need much per hole. Steve pried up interlopers and discovered several new sprouts erupting after our brief rain. Sarah does everything well AND treks back to the car pulling Deborah's red wagon. Karen raked out each isle







leaving the top of each row higher and the fence ends lower so water will flow more easily. Lucy strolled by on a Saturday to spread encouragement. It's beginning to look like a garden again! In her spare time Sarah got this supportive letter to the editor published in *The Chronicle*:

Year jerseys you love to sell. Golden State loves to pride itself on its leadership — so let's see it, outside of the gift shop and in the community.

Stephan Brooks, Fremont

Maintain Dahlia Dell

Regarding "A solution to the street closure of JFK Drive" (Letters, April 9): The letter writer's solution to the JFK Drive closure controversy is a great one.

The concern I have for access extends to the under-the-radar challenges of the Dahlia Dell volunteer gardeners. The treasured dell is the result of the scientific expertise, financial support and physical labor of five individuals, all of whom are getting up there in age and need access to the dell. Beginning the closure past the tennis courts and dell entrance is a win-win.

Sarah Smith, San Francisco

I am going wild at the Dell thinning out too successful sophomore clumps. These plants from last year send up TOO



MANY gorgeous green shoots. Why is this blessing a potential problem? Instead of one tuber sucking up secret sauce, there's several hungry bruisers fighting for dwindling resources. Imagine if we put a high school football team in a small bathroom with a few candy bars. Not pretty. Leaving all these tubers to fend for themselves creates a bushy crowded plant with long spindly stems, smaller flowers and a pruning mess. Solution? I carefully dig up the clump; often some of it just falls apart in my hands. I set aside all the tubers

and dig the hole bigger. I add my balanced fertilizer; my Dr. Earth mycorrhizae, and a little sulfur or cinnamon. Then I re-plant the healthiest sprouted tuber and cross my fingers. The rest of the clump I divide, soak in bleach, sulfur the stubs and pot up in milk cartons. My loft and greenhouse are overflowing!

POT ROOTS: Steve asked me what to do with all these extras. Two possibilities: sell the extras or make pot roots. I do both. Pot roots are tiny tubers or cuttings grown in 4"x4" containers, sunk into the soil. In a 16"x16" section you could grow 16 pot roots. These will grow tall, blooming dahlias in a very small space. The container will constrict the tuber development;

often the tiny tuber mass will have as many eyes as a huge “free range” clump might have developed just in a much smaller space. These compact genetic packages produce great sprouts for next year’s greenhouse cuttings. Also, pot roots are great “insurance” against disaster. The Dell is prone to all kinds of devastation: curious raccoons, rambunctious dogs, marauding moles, voles and gophers, soccer balls, Frisbees, children small enough to romp through the fence slats, and—alas—predatory human thieves. So a goodly supply of “insurance” pots can come in handy.



LABELS: I like venetian blinds with the name written in pencil. Pencil does not fade like a Sharpie. Pencils do not run off in rain. Lou, Sue and Pat type their labels and laminate them to make them weather-proof. These look really spiffy. Tony uses his label maker and punches out each name on tape. If anyone needs some venetian blind strips, Loren blessed me with bunches. Just ask. John Morton likes to tie his venetian blinds to rebar stakes so they jingle and clatter in the wind. He swears it irritates gophers and other deleterious critters. I also keep a written map of the Dell as a sort of double safety net—just in case.....like wearing a belt AND suspenders.

BABY’S FIRST COCKTAIL? When to start lavishing the first foliar cocktail spray on new plants? **NOW!** For the last month I



have plied my burgeoning wee plantlets with Sluggo Plus to stave off the earwigs, snails and slugs. Pat will tell you that the earwigs can devour a promising clump overnight. But now that my plants have at least 3-4 sets of leaves, I can begin lightly spraying them. In the beginning I mix my cocktail at about 1/3

strength: liquid balanced fertilizer, Captain Jack's Dead Bug, Stylet Oil, and dishwashing soap. AFTER WATERING, I spritz, using my little hand-pumped sprayer. This lasts so much longer than those flimsy plastic squirters and only costs @\$5. It has a tiny filter on its intake tube that's easy to keep clear.



PINCHING OUT, TOPPING OR STOPPING: These are three terms for the same thing: removing the topmost set of leaves and or bud. When to do this? Sometimes when I bring cuttings out of the greenhouse they are spindly, leaf pairs far apart and the stem wobbles in the air. I could plant it like this. I could place a sleeve (like a milk cartons with both ends cut off or a gallon pot with the bottom

removed) over the wimpy plant to protect it from wind and

shade it a bit . OR I could nip off the top set of leaves. Two more branches will grow from the



break. I also pinch out the centers when I spot my first bud. I take the bud, the two budlets on either side and the first two leaves and nip the entire bundle just above the second pair of

leaves. This accomplishes 3 things. Firstly, all the energy that would have gone into making a flower goes instead into making better roots. This gives your dahlia a really good start and firm “foundation” for thriving. Secondly, it keeps your plant from being tall and gangly, letting the stems and stalk “bulk up” a wee bit more. Lastly, that initial bloom probably would have been “crotch bound,” ensnared on a short short stem between lots of leaves: trapped and hard to appreciate. I pinch out almost all my dahlias either in the greenhouse or at first bud. Lou and Pat do NOT pinch. Maybe you will decide on a case by case basis?

MAUS HAUS VISITORS: Thank you Tara, Karen, and Tony for coming to help divide, label and pot up tubers. Tara wielded The Beast, my electric oscillating tool. Tara also assessed wee plants in my greenhouse to see which had roots bursting through their bottoms. These happy plants Tara repotted into larger containers: the 1”x4” moved into 4x4’s and the 4x4”s upgraded into luxury one gallons.



Great to visit with Jamie and Hedda upon his return from the Philippines. Soc brought over a bunch of extra pots and milk cartons. Paula dropped off a trove of 4x4’s and milk cartons.

So between the greenhouse and thinning out sophomore clumps at the Dell, I have a bunch of dahlias if you need more to fill out your planting.



Yours in dirt,

Deborah

Photo credits: Dietz; Gaensler,
Joseph, Nelson

Membership and layout artist: Deborah

Snail Mail Mistress: Patricia



