

Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



NEXT MEETING: 14 June at 7:30 at the Hall of Flowers @ 9th and Lincoln. Program: **SHOW AND TELL**. Please bring a cool tool or a product that you think others might enjoy learning about. We'll pass them around and explain why we like them. We'll talk germinating, planting, watering and staking. Please bring your extra dahlias in pots or milk cartons or tubers for sale to our group.

A YEAR OF GROWING DAHLIAS



Erik treated us to a step by step procedure for growing dahlias year around. Spiced with humor and facts, Erik's talk always plants a few new facts no matter how often you've heard it. " His sensational photos, effortless storytelling, and sparkling sense of humor entertained and informed everyone present, " reported Sarah. Thanks to the people who brought dahlias for the society to sell. We have an enviable war chest now and hope to throw a tremendous



BIG FLORIBUNDA SHOW August 20-21.

ERIK'S BIG

Some of Liebe's unpromising at our these doubtful blind them in a couple big with damp towels his warm bathroom. germinated given treatment. Several eager growers at



EXPERIMENT

tuber trove looked sale. Erik took stubs home, popped trays, covered them and let them bask in Voila! Many many his novel spa were snapped up by our May meeting.

Erik reminded everyone that tubers like to be warm, moist but not wet, and in the DARK as though they were in the earth. Then their wee buds will reach for the sun. Try it with your recalcitrant treasures. At this point, you have nothing to loose.



ANNUAL TUBER SALE: SUCCESS IN SPITE OF OURSELVES

Thanks to so many people for so many contributions. What a crazy final week dash. First, we planned to hold our sale at St. Luke's church parking lot, then at the last minute we had to scramble for alternative accommodations. Tinnee really hustled to work out a deal whereby we could have two small rooms in the Hall of Flowers because the auditorium—our usual sales hall—was already booked. Whew! So first we sent out announcements about the church, then we sent out counter announcements cancelling the church and embracing the Fair Grounds Building. To add to the confusion, our greenhouse team prognosticated only @200 cuttings and were considering rationing how many any one individual might buy at the sale so no one alerted the public. Then in the last 2 weeks leading up to our event, the sun shone brightly and the donor tubers sprouted munificently. Pat posted our event on Facebook and Deborah sent out flyers to @ 300 email addresses in the final 3 days. Some people heard the siren song of dahlias dahlias dahlias, but not enough buyers to sell out, alas.

At 7 am Tinnee organized the truck cavalcade: transferring 600 4x4's from the greenhouse to private automobiles who trucked them to our venue. Then eager hands helped shift flat after flat into our meeting room where Tinnee had beautiful framed photos for each variety. Ray, Steve, Laura and Pat schlepped and schlepped. Deborah added her 4 flats of Jessicas, Blomquist Jeffs, AC Bens, and Pennhills to the fray. Lou



hauled in an entire carful of “shopping carts,” cardboard flats in which to carry new purchases.



Meanwhile, Erik deemed the Library the Tuber Room and our meeting room The Cutting Room. Nathaniel and Debbie sorted tubers. Liebe donated hundreds of gorgeous tubers which delighted so many shoppers. (Major work, Liebe! Thank you) Len marked and marked great lots of roots that had been brought without names on the tubers but rather all bunched in named bags. Jenna made signs. Freethinking Tony set up his lovely





C'mon In directional poster. Erik set up a triptych with the history of the Dell, our City's official flower, and various dahlias as a great educational opportunity. Collette pointed innumerable people in its direction for edification.





Peggy brought her friend Ellen, who would manage the San Leandro Tuber Sale the following weekend. Ellen went so far



beyond observing; she leapt in with all systems at every juncture to help. What a worker!!! As a reward, she carted back to San Leandro 6 flats of cuttings to augment their sale: one good Dahlia Society helping another.



By 9 AM, Erik charged his troops: Good Work! Lou also addressed our volunteers, telling them how things had progressed in the greenhouse. Deborah exhorted public relations with the public and designated a few





“counters” like Margo who used Tinnee’s tally slips to help speed up the lines at Joe, Paula and Deborah’s cash registers (cardboard boxes with \$ delineations). Debbie F established our membership table with

Tinnee’s gorgeous poster draped full length, Meridith’s pot holder and placemats and Deborah’s calendars for sale.



Meanwhile, Jenn brought in Pete’s coffee steaming hot, Shelly preferred still-warm bagels and schemer, and John D. gifted hands with Ghirardelli chocolates. Mitzi surprised us with glazed doughnut holes. As Napoleon exhorted, “an army marches on its belly.”

Because there was no long, patient line waiting to get in, Jenna went to the front of the Fair Building like a carnival barker and enticed Golden Gate Park visitors to come shop. She was

amazingly successful! Major effort, Jenna!! Joe, our treasurer, reports that our sale proved successful despite ourselves netting over \$3000. That will pay for our show room rental, ribbons and ca\$h prizes at our August FLORIBUNDA!





NEXT YEAR we will be more Covid aware and know how to better get publicity out. Next year more members will dig and divide and label their tubers to share. Next year we will **DOUBLE** our income and celebrate accordingly. Congratulations and thank you to **ALL** our wonderful volunteers.

WOOL COMPOST?

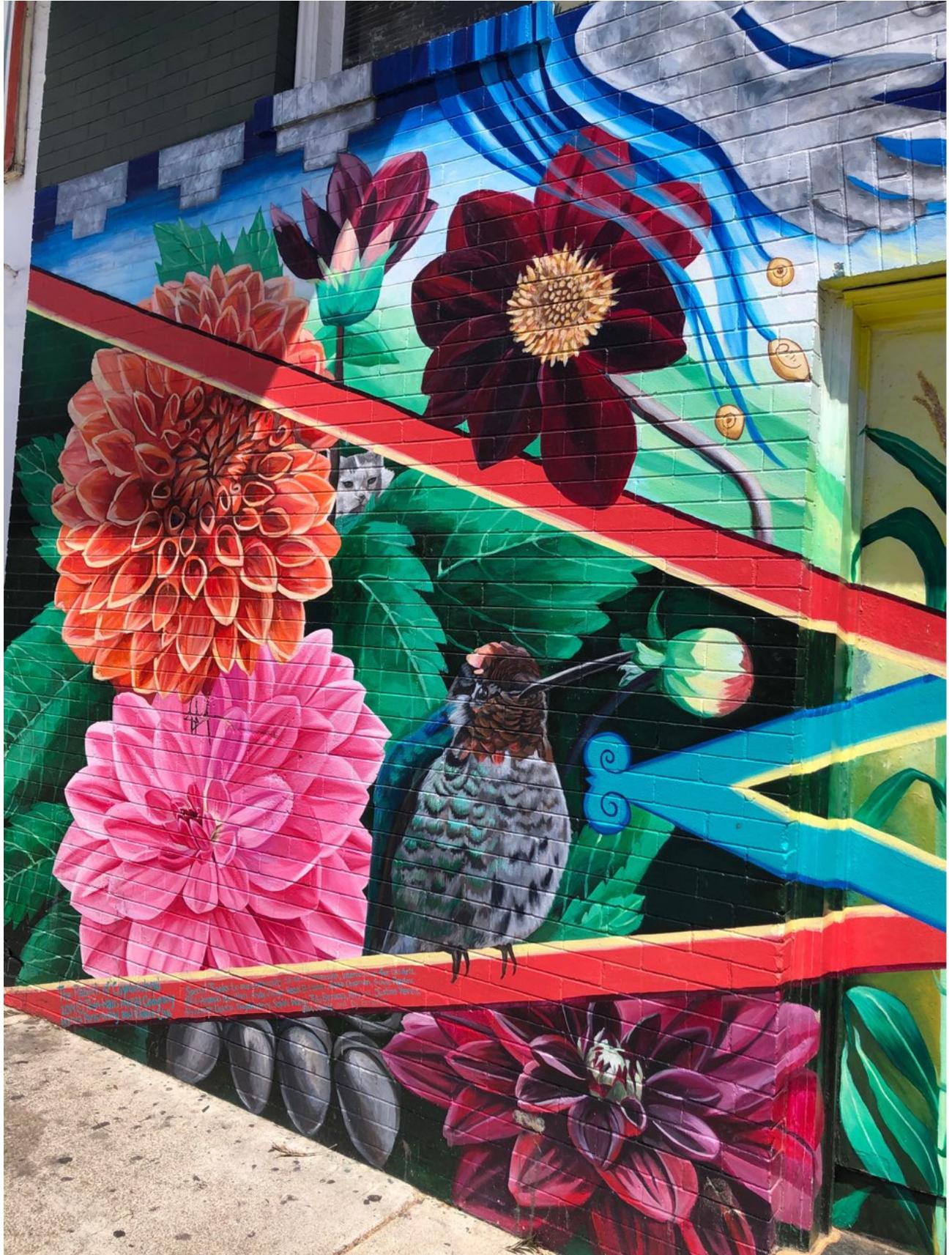


Whilst traipsing about the Cotswolds, Sarah spotted bags of Wool Compost at a nursery. What could this be? Wool Pellets! All-natural wool pellets provide slow release fertilizer (9-0-2) that feeds plants the whole growing season. They hold 20 times their weight in water, which reduces the time spent watering. They also wick away extra water which keeps plants from being overwatered. Wool pellets expand with watering, too, so they increase soil porosity, giving plants optimal root growth without the need for other soil additives. Great for use in containers or your

traditional garden. England has long been famous for its sheep....

DAHLIA MURAL

Tara spotted this wonderful dahlia and hummingbird mural at 18th and Valencia. Stop by to take a photo of yourself with it. So lovely. Thanks, Tara, for sharing with us.



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



Christina reports that her sister Cynthia is delighted by the dahlias planted at her group home. She loved watching as they dug the holes, set in the plants and labeled the stakes. Right after planting, Covid snuck in crashing Cynthia's whole group into quarantine. Lucy bought a bunch of cool new dahlias at our sale so she needed to dig up 6 of her last year's beauties to make room. She brought her clumps to Deborah for

help dividing and stayed to pot them all in milk cartons or 4x4's. Call Deborah if you need more dahlias.....

CAVALCADE OF CHOICE DAHLIAS

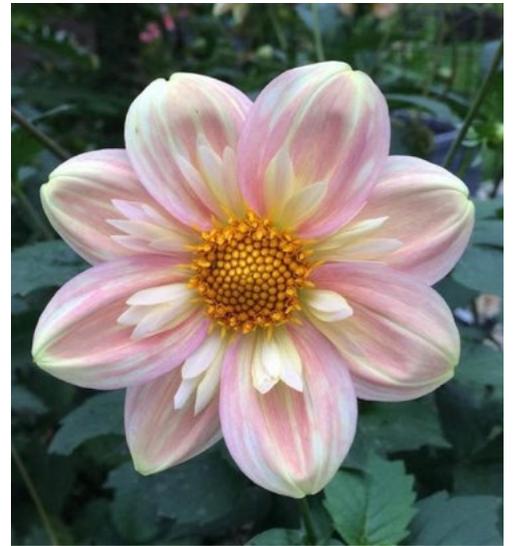
By popular demand, here is one more tronche of gorgeous blooms from last season. Soon we will have our own from this year to view.



Allen's Bramble

Wynne's Farmer John

Allen's Battle Angel



Aspire





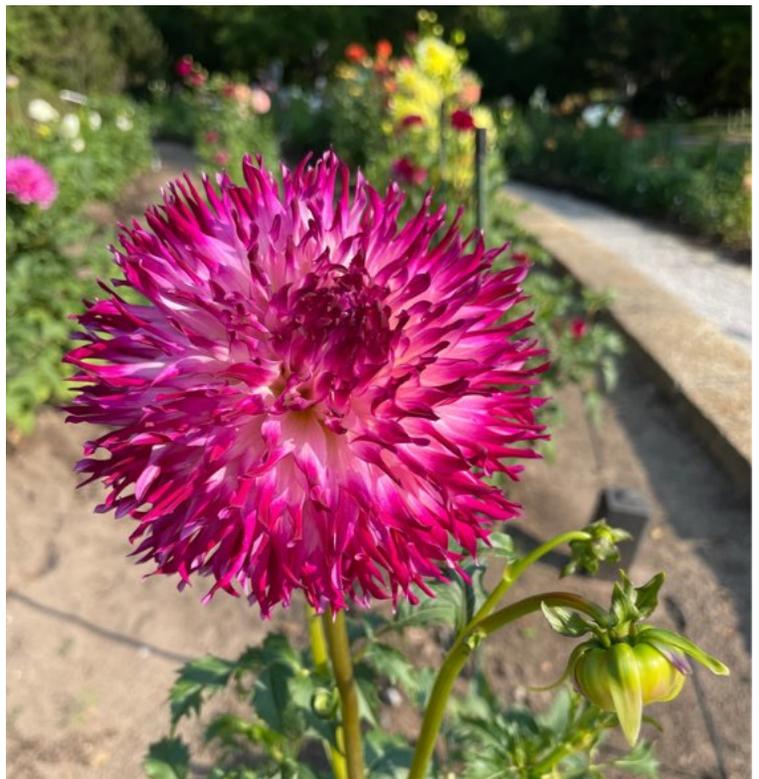
Crazy 4 Teddy



Ebrano



Gabriella Marie



Last 2: L: Trelyn Rhianon R: Higgs Wonder

NEW PRODUCTS



Lauren bicycled up to the Dell with some Bayer's Vitamin B2. He uses it to blunt the shock when transplanting. Thank you, Lauren! Paula reports using General Hydroponics BioThrive Grow, 1-Quart \$17

which she found in "a marijuana plant store." Later she looked it up on Amazon.

Sounds promising. Sarah bought some BeGone from Sloat Garden, featuring putrefied eggs, cloves and garlic



many trace minerals. asked for clarification



and promising to fend off birds, raccoons, squirrels, opossums, and foxes. Sarah also scored MaxSea a dry fertilizer made primarily of sea weed. Purportedly, MaxSea is a good source of N P and K as well as Lastly, several people as to which planting



soil Patricia Santana found worked best in her experiment from May's newsletter: G&B's Blue Ribbon Potting Soil performed sooooo much better than the Costco equivalent.

DAHLIA DELL DOINGS

Erik organized a Great Drip In to repair the massive drip system which waters the entire slope. All 4 donors on the Mountain set to work. Joe sunk cages. Erik dug in both plants and tubers. When Jerry wondered why St. Luke's Church had no action the prior



Saturday when he went to buy dahlias, Erik munificently gave him several promising tubers and plants to make up for the omission. Sue replaced some recalcitrant tubers who preferred staying dormant rather than germinating. Sarah

planted a darling Shipley Spot which had bloomed in her sunroom at home thereby earned **FIRST BLOOM** at the Dell. Elvira, in Deborah's patch, soon opened for second sighting quickly followed by BJ's Rival. Christina dropped by from Sacramento to buy a AA gonzo dahlia as well as check about planting in Novato. Steve has become quite the water specialist. Karen trekked in



lugging green rebar from Roger and Marilyn and stayed to weed and disbud. Soc checked out progress and reported that all but 3 of his dahlias have returned from last year. Brigid practiced disbudding Elvira and manually watered some of the more vulnerable dahlias during our mini-heat wave. She mastered her lessons in transplanting and making cuttings. Allen and Deb Haas, from North Carolina, shared cutting and tuber sale strategems. A ghost from our 2014 National Show, Melissa H, popped by to show her violist friend the Dell. Melissa promised to come disbud soon.



WANTON VANDALISM

The entire Dell has been plagued with wanton vandalism: tubers



and plants dug up and flung about, stakes ripped out, water buckets overturned. So many varieties lost. Human destruction or animal? The holes with peanuts at the bottom seemed clearly caused by provisioning squirrels. But the rest?? Deborah carefully raked out her section



and discovered raven and raccoon footprints, but no human impressions. The Park gardeners say the ravens have become

a major menace. They (the ravens not the rangers) act like teenage hooligans who've just discovered cow tipping. Deborah and Erik have been gardening here since 1993 and have never experienced this sort of havoc. Lauren said there must be some reason behind this bad behavior because animals usually operate



on a thin survival margin; they don't have the luxury of giddy hooliganism. Exasperated, Lou bemoaned that several of his tubers have been recklessly exhumed **THREE TIMES!** He replanted and they re-demolished **THREE TIMES.** Deborah spotted 8 ravens thrashing Sarah's newly planted tier, relentlessly prizing out sticks, toppling pots and pecking wee green sprouts to death without eating. So all 7 Dellians implemented deterrents: pots atop poles to clang and look dangerous, sleeves around the newly planted as protective collars, sparkly ribbon streamers,



and white garbage bags like floating scarecrow ghosts. Sarah has draped, dangled, and blockaded to the point she calls her patch “a junkyard.” Sue has lost so many, she is despondent. A passerby reported that the Park Staff have deployed plastic dead raven replicas around the Bowling Green. An old wife’s tale posits that ravens are so smart that they will stay away from places where their fellow flock folks have been killed. ????? Does anyone have a couple raven carcasses we could experiment with?

COMMITTEE NEEDED

Our dahlia society needs a small group of creative people to form a Program Committee. These people would scour our world to find interesting speakers and topics for our meeting programs. We

only need a couple special programs a year, but we REALLY NEED them. Please contact Deborah dahlia.dietz@gmail.com We need fresh eyes and ears, please.

INTERNATIONAL KUDOS

Through a long chain of events, Sarah mentioned her new passion with dahlias and her apprenticeship at the Dell thereby planting an idea which percolated in the brain of publisher Todd Oppenheimer. What began as a 700 word puff piece with pretty pictures, blossomed into a major opus by brilliant writer Thomas Cooper with exquisite photos by Jak Wonderly. Craftsmanship Quarterly, and international 'zine, highlights "Artisans to Innovators, Tales of Extraordinary Quests." Oppenheimer exhorts us to deploy this url to as many people as we can reach.

<https://craftsmanship.net/of-dahlias-obsessive-growers-and-their-high-stakes-beauty-contests/>



JUST BURSTING OUT JUNE

You should be just about finished planting. Your clumps await their **FIRST COCKTAIL**. To begin with, I make up two sprayers' worth. The first is the happy bottle: a little liquid fertilizer like the BioThrive Grow Paula found at the marijuana store. It gives your young dahlias a few more nutrients. You could add a little Stylet Oil (1 tablespoon per gallon) just to prevent mildew early on. In the second sprayer I put together a bolder cocktail for certain troubled plants. Start with your liquid fertilizer 1-2 tablespoons per gallon and Stylet Oil. Add a little Spinosad (or Captain Jack's Dead Bug) for bity munchie bugs like leaf hopper, leaf miner, ear wigs, and opportunistic flier-inners. I will add a bit of Be GONE, purported to dissuade squirrels, raccoons, possums, RAVENS, and their ilk. Cross your fingers. To both bottles I usually add a squirt of dishwashing soap to act as a surfactant which helps the cocktail stick to the leaves. **ONLY** escalate to the second bottle on plants that need extra help. Do you have room around the margins of your garden to add a few alyssum both purple and white. Alyssum attracts good bugs and predatory bugs and adds bright color along the ground as your dahlias grow tall. Ideally cocktails are sprayed after sun down.



WATERING SYSTEMS

At the Dell I use a PVC pipe system with emitters. I have my clumps in troughs which I can fill with water for deep watering. The sandy Dell enjoys excellent drainage. Lou hand waters his dahlias. He makes a basin around each which he fills with a hose as he walks around. This way he checks out each of his plants at

I am still field dressing some of my plants. I am thinning out sophomores who have many many sprouts emerging. I put the extra tubers in milk cartons and the broken off sprouts into 1x1x3" cutting-starter pots in the greenhouse. These can later be transferred to 4x4" and grown into pot roots for next year. Because I've been doing this since February, I still have a lot of great cuttings and milk cartons of cool stock for this season. Contact me if you need some more.

DISBUDDING

As Karen and Brigid will attest, disbudding has begun. I prefer to allow just one bud per stem, thus channelling all the energy from the two removed buds into the remaining bloom: longer stronger stem, bigger bloom and better roots. Check out previous newsletters (you can look up by key word) for pix of disbudding. Also the ADS website has some excellent Youtube videos about disbudding and pinching out.

TOPPING, STOPPING, PINCHING OUT

I pinch out my new plants. When I see the glimmerings of a first bud, I steel myself to go below the first pair of leaves and snip the leaf pair, the central bud and any other wee buds associated with it. As much as I REALLY want to see the first flower, I know that it is better to remove the first effort and send all that energy into the roots and the stalk of the little plant. Then the next flush of blooms will be more magnificent; the dahlia plant will be bushier and sturdier. Lou does not pinch out. His blooms are spectacular. Maybe try an experiment: pinch half, leave half and decide which you prefer.

ROGUE

Are some of your plants coming up misformed or stunted not from insect damage but somehow genetically unfortunate? Alas, this happens. They are probably virused or diseased. These should be pulled out and put in the garbage—not the compost—the garbage.

Please let me know if you've discovered a cool tool or a helpful product you think others would be interested in learning about.

Yours in dirt,
Deborah

Photo credits: Capps, Davis, Dietz, Donohugh, Gaensler, Gott, Kaiser, Kelly, Muir, Stomach, Tobiasen, Wynne, Cowlitz

Snail Mail: Patricia







