



# Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



**NEXT MEETING:** July 12 at 7:30 at 9th and Lincoln.  
**Program:** Using your ADS Classification Guide, Staging for show, identifying dahlias and their forms. We will also talk about different ways YOU can help with our upcoming Show, August 19-21. Please bring some blooms to educate your fellow DCSers and your Classification Bibles—even if they are old ones. As before, Deborah will be at the Dell from 5:45-6:45. C'mon by.

## SHOW AND TELL



Such a fun meeting where DSC members brought useful tools to share. Sarah demo'd a homemade gopher cage which she deploys both above and below ground. Above ground she puts it on top of young plants to protect them from ravens and





**raccoons. She also shared an odd cloths pin with 2 circles carved out which she found in England. What could it be? It's perfect for holding stems up on stakes to keep them straight. Collette demonstrated an exquisite in-between size shovel for "the**



**luxury garden set" neither as**



**small as a trowel nor as large as a full-handled tool but exactly right for most of her needs. Since most markers fade, Collete found a super long-lasting Sharpie marker. Poultry sheers capable of gnashing through chicken bones, gives Toni the easy leverage she needs to cut through tough stalks.**





**Patricia shared a container of Jack's super bloom fertilizer which she deploys once her bushes have begun to bud up. Peggy hefted in a huge "potting desk."**



**This large green moulded sink goes on any flat surface and keeps all the dirt, sand or muck contained for any dahlia chore she has. Then she empties it and hoses the whole thing off; it looks like**

**new again. Wow! Peggy also showed us a starter tray for up to 8 tubers. She fills this with Pro Mix from the great Santa Rosa Garden Store Harmony. Adds a spritz and puts it atop a heating pad. It saves her a lot of space. Once her tubers have sprouted, she transfers each to a milk carton, but this gives her a lot of heating pad exposure to provoke germination. Tanya demonstrated two**



**cool tools. The first, stainless steel Hari Hari, a Japanese transplanting tool @\$55 with one serrated edge and numbers**



**along the straight side does most of her work.**

**What was that little**

**yellow thing? A nozzle to slip on the top of a big soda bottle to turn it into a spritzer. So simple and soooo useful. Although she could not bring it in, Bae showed us photos of the various size augers she can attach to her drill to zip holes of any size into the dirt. Very effective.**



**Jenna brought us the official news that there will be petitions circulating to revert JFK to its pre-Covid status along with the Great Highway and so-called Slow Streets. Deborah finished off with 3 items. Her sturdy screen made so many years ago for her by DJ, is something she uses almost daily to cull the junk from any dirt container. If you are just beginning a new plot in rocky soil, a sifting screen like this is essential. Secondly, she shared a black**

**lid from Dick Meyers that goes over the top of a 5-gallon bucket protecting tools or fertilizer inside from the elements and making a bit of a padded perch for a tired derriere. Lastly, she pulled off her oh-so-lifelike boutonniere and showed how she turned a silk dahlia into a wearable pin. Too fun. Sent in later, Leann takes the bottom off a 5 gallon pot; drills 50 1/4" holes all over it; sinks in with only 3" above the ground and fills it with compost at her leisure; the worms do the rest. How does she keep vermin out? Ha! she bought a screw on top at one of the big box stores. Leann says several varmints have tried to raid her juicy worm trove but none have succeeded in breaking into her Ft. Knox of compost. Brilliant.**

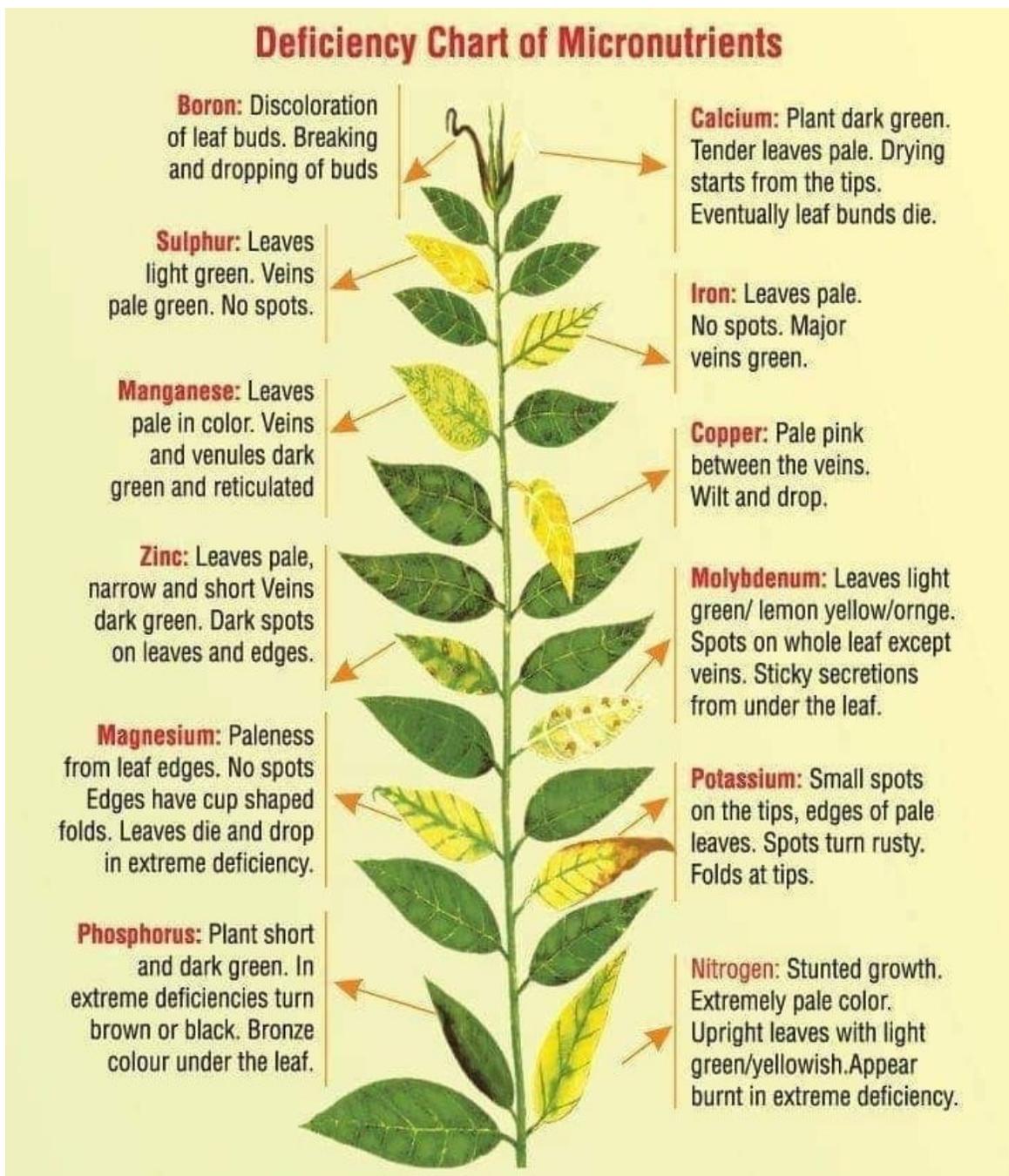
**How glorious to get a look at first blooms. People delighted in the BB ic magenta madness called Jane. How darling is BJ Rival, an orange annenome. Arena's Sunset is one of the few miniature laciniated forms bred**



right here in SF. Pam Howden reigned regally magnificent, scintillating orange perfection. A massive Clearview Cameron caused gasps. 2022 season is starting!

## DIAGNOSE YOUR LEAVES

As you run your critical eyes over your dahlias, consider this chart in figuring out what is going wrong and how to respond.



## GENOME PROJECT GARDEN



**Dr. Virginia Walbot, a biologist famous for her Indian Corn color discoveries, spearheaded the American Dahlia Society's Genome Project. Kristine Albrecht worked assiduously to get funding. The land she has in Palo Alto is valued at \$10 million an acre, so her dahlias are among the most valuable in the world! (You can still contribute) Over the winter, squirrels and raccoons invaded Dr. Walbot's greenhouse and destroyed most of her precious tubers. Erik answered Dr. Walbot's request, "We just**

**loaded Shelley's trunk with 35+ dahlias of many types. Some are rooted cuttings, others tubers growing already in milk cartons where you can peel off the paper and plant, A dozen are in small plastic bags as sprouted but not rooted tubers. All are labelled, some with clear printed tags, and others by hand. Given that we are MD's with bad handwriting I included a Dahlia Classification book where you can find the official names, sizes and colors all spelled out.” So Erik rounded up the last of Liebe’s bounteous trove along with a few plants left over from our sale and delivered them to her laboratory garden down at Stanford. Kristine organized a Zoom lecture from Dr. Walbot on how color is predicated in dahlias. This pay-for-view contributed to our Genome Fund. It turns out that most wild dahlias are triploidy: they have three sets of chromosomes. (We humans are diploid: two sets.) However, the competition pedigreed dahlias most of us grow are Octiploid: 8 sets!! Only two other domestic plants are so complicated: corn and strawberries. How did a non-commercial ornamental extravagance like dahlias develop such sophisticated evolution?**

**[https://web.stanford.edu/group/dahlia\\_genetics/index.htm](https://web.stanford.edu/group/dahlia_genetics/index.htm)**

**[https://web.stanford.edu/group/dahlia\\_genetics/stock\\_farm\\_info/stock\\_farm\\_info.htm](https://web.stanford.edu/group/dahlia_genetics/stock_farm_info/stock_farm_info.htm) = dahlia teaching sites**

## **SCIENCE ACADEMY DELLIAN TOUR**

**Dell Volunteer, Tim Wong, Bio systems and marine specialist, strolled other Dell volunteers through an**



**intense walking seminar. Tim began as a volunteer and slowly became indispensable: he builds massive vertical wall gardens, he babysits a whole coral reef 30' deep in his wetsuit, he orders butterfly pupae from all over the world and released a bunch of newly emerged wonders**



**right in front of us! He trains penguins at feeding time. He even set up an underground bumble bee**

**nest where they dine upon deadheaded dahlias! He pointed out mahogany and chocolate trees as well as humongous spider webs. Our first time back since Covid began, we all raved about how everything has matured. However, the hottest day of the year is NOT the time to climb the RainForest spiral to the top; Deborah almost fainted. We all quickly revived in the cool depths of the nether aquarium caves as we watched the fish race across in an explosion of color as**



**Tim fed them from the upper scaffolding. Such a great**



**finale!**

## DAHLIA BANKS

**Dahlia Banks work much like the concept of money banks: you trust your investment for safety and hope for a little rate of return. Find special people who have good dahlia gardens and maybe a little extra space. Request that they grow your spare, but special, dahlias for this season. In other words, foster out your beloved and rarer varieties. Usually the recipient is delighted to have new, cool, or scarce entities growing in their patch. When springtime comes, if you have put your “eggs” in enough baskets there will be plenty of tubers and cuttings to share with everyone. Moreover, if you’ve distributed several extras, your cultivars are hedged against deprivation or trauma in any one single garden: living insurance. Start thinking right now: who might be your DAHLIA BANKERS?**

## SF CHEER!

**Over a sea of red, 3 women are thrown into the sky. What’s happening? In the valley near our Dell, the SF Cheer (formally known as the Hayward HA HA) practice their cheering routines before performing in the Aids Garden Pride Show. Begun in 1986, the all-gay squad began raising**



**funds to combat the AIDS scourge. Still at it—this year money earned goes to Transgender causes—they are still flipping and flying.**

## **YES! DSC WILL HOST A SHOW! FLORIBUNDA!**

**We will need all your help to resuscitate this glorious tradition after 2 years of Covid shutdown. Start thinking of how you can help and what you will enter. So set up will be the evening of August 19 all through the night. Judging will be Saturday. Prizes will be awarded Sunday. We will need help at 4:30 Friday setting up tables and 4:00 Sunday breaking down tables. These people would help lay out the ADS number cards according to Lou's map. We need teams of two for 2-3 hours each both Saturday and Sunday at the Members and People Choice table (total 12 people). Please contact Deborah [dahlia.dietz@gmail.com](mailto:dahlia.dietz@gmail.com) to volunteer for a shift. Sitting down the whole time, you encourage people to vote for their People's Choice dahlia, answer questions about our favorite flower and encourage them to join our illustrious society. We will also need roving ambassadors to cruise the show answering the public's questions and keeping them out of our members' only area. Deborah is also collecting names of qualified judges and those who would like to clerk. The clerks accompany the judges, listen as they debate the merits of certain blooms, distribute colored dots, record the top choices and LEARN A LOT. You need be able to write clearly, listen acutely, and work in a team. Tinnee is creating a jpg and a pfd poster. So**

**think about where you can hang these posters and how you can distribute them on whatever social media you use. Do you have contacts with any of the radio or TV stations or local newspapers? Boy and Girl Scouts? Gardening Groups? Master Gardeners? Book clubs? Our Floribunda! is free to the public so EVERYONE should be invited.**

### **\$PONSOR\$HIP?**

**Besides the x1, x3 and x5 bloom entries, DSC has special ca\$h categorie\$ like Floating Water Lily, Nature's Oddity and People's Choice. We encourage our DSC members to underwrite one or more of these. For example, Deborah offers a \$25 premium for the Best Old Fashioned Vase. Patricia sponsors several categories including Hall of Fame dahlia. One of the categories lacking backing this year is THE LARGEST DAHLIA IN THE WORLD which goes to the widest diameter bloom in the whole show and goes on to competition with the rest of the United States. We hope one or two people together could support this prize for \$30-50? There are 4 categories in the photo contest which can be underwritten with \$10 or more each. Or if you have a favorite dahlia, like Daddy's Girl \$pon\$ored by Sarah for \$20, you can add it to our Show Schedule by contacting Deborah or Lou. Other possible categories are a special color. Bi-colors and variegated are already \$pon\$ored, but purple? white? not yet. Did your mama have a special form she favored above all the others? You could**

**\$pon\$or that form in her memory. Think about it, but think quickly; drop dead date is July 21.**

## **HERE COMES THE JUDGE**

**Saturday, July 30, San Leandro hosts a judging seminar from 9 am to 4 PM. Lunch included. Your benevolent society will pay your admission. Sign up and location will follow in a separate email to all. Who should attend? Anyone interested in learning more about dahlias whether you eventually hope to become a judge or not. Learn what makes a GOOD dahlia. What are major faults and minor faults? Meet fellow dahlianeers from all over the Bay Area. Consider car pooling to save gas.**

## **DAHLIA DELL DOINGS**

**Word must have gotten out that there's over 80 dahlia bushes in bloom already because throngs of people have hiked in to the Dell. (Or maybe it's the corpse plant at the Conservatory doing it's once in many many years fantastic 5' bloom**



**which smells like carrion.)**



**For sure, the Pride Quilt brought Tony and Ens to cruise the Dell as well. people pushed with 4 sit-down to cruise the reminisced about the past checks things out Saturday nice. Mitzu her painting She's teaching**



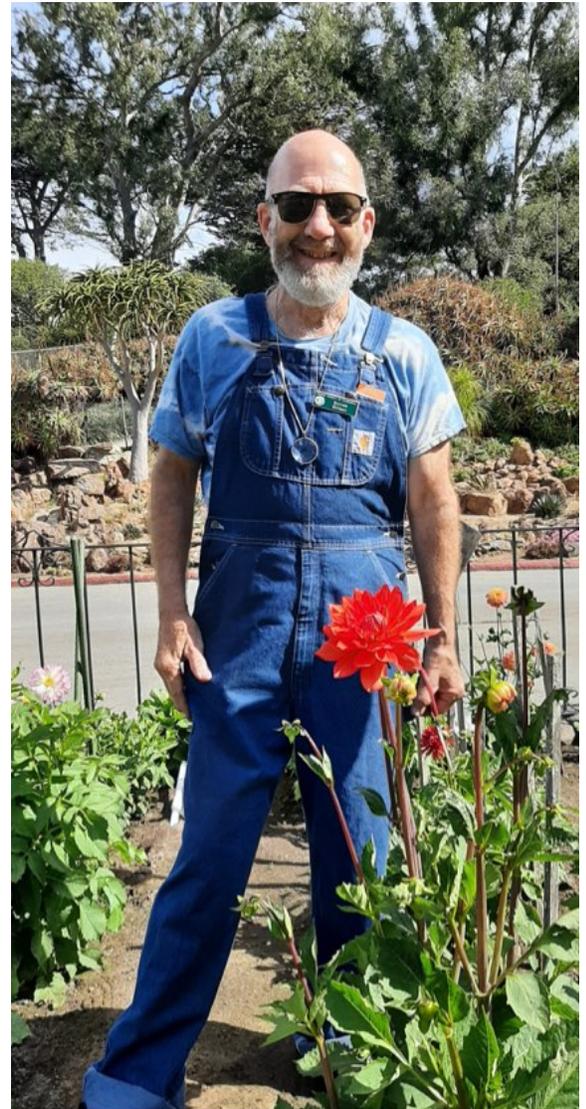
**About 15 elderly their walkers — breaks en route— view. Many growing them in themselves. Soc regularly on mornings. So brought one of students by. her amazing**



**water color techniques—  
lucky learners. So color-  
coordinated she could lead  
an Easter Parade, Lucy  
graced us with her spring  
chic. Passing through on the  
way to Bouquets to the Arts  
at the De Young, Minna  
remembered why she loves  
dahlias. Also straight from  
the De Young, Barry and  
Marcia picked up some**



**cuttings to grow in Walnut Creek. Loren surprised the Dellians with fresh! raspberries picked only 20 minutes prior. Deborah, Sarah and Karen sat in the shade and gobbled his sweet explosions down. Steve proudly donned his new farmer overalls to hook up the water hoses. Great to see the whole Hillside Gang including Joe finish planting. MMMMM! The public loves the Fried Egg, Powder Puff Polka. Mexico celebrates a fiesta every day. Knee Deep 3605 holds up even in the nasty hot spell. Jessica, 3415, saucily waves her wanton red finger nails. Lou has a**



**couple seedlings already blooming. Check out these can't-be-seen-anywhere-else blooms. Pat's Skipley Splish Splash,**



**6013, dances in the sun. Her**



**Kelgai Ann waterlily causes gasps as people wonder if someone snuck a peony into the Dahlia Dell. Sarah protects her emerging wee green dahlias with gopher cages both**

**above AND below ground.**

**Wonderful to have so many people volunteer or visit on Saturday mornings. As most of**





**the plants mature, the ravens**



**interest in them  
the ridiculous  
paraphernalia is  
the Dell will soon  
destination.**



**wanes. So slowly  
scarecrow  
coming down and  
be an even lovelier**



## **JUBILANT JULY**

**WOW! Dahlias exploding into bloom all over the place. So glorious!. Have you been disbudding? Remove all the extra buds between the central main bud and the first**



**pair of leaves. This yields a longer, stronger stem and a bigger flower. When should you cut your dead head? It depends on your purpose. Do you want a lovely bloom for**

**the house? If so, pick it exactly at the height of its perfection: all the petals have unfurled, the center is still tight with a little more to come. Treated well, it should last 6-7 days in a vase. At the Dell, I like to wait until the pollen can be seen at the center; the dahlia is past its prime and beginning to decline but it will last 3-4 days in a vase. You want to keep the glory in the garden until the last gasp? As soon as you see a dropped petal, deadhead lest you end up with messy petals all over the remaining leaves and ground. Yucko. This invites bugs and rot.**

## **WHERE TO DEADHEAD**

**“Cut to new growth.” Let this be your mantra. A big mistake many people make is not cutting at the joint of new growth. If you deadhead too high, there is no place for new growth to protrude itself; your plant will stop growing. Improper deadheading can result in your bushes turning brown by mid-September. Horrors. Properly disbudded and deadheaded, your dahlias can yield a great bouquet on the Thanksgiving table and even a few colorful punctuations into December.**

## **EXTENDING VASE LIFE**

**The #1 most important factor in keeping a bloom going in a vase is A CLEAN VASE. I put mine in the dishwasher. Consider that dahlias are pinocytotic: they suck up liquids through numerous channels like tiny green straws. If anything—a dust mote, a smidgen of mold, a microscopic**

**dirt of muck—clogs one of these water channels, the dahlia chokes a little. If too much microscopic flotsam jams up too many of these conduits, the bloom begins to die. It's like suffocation. So CLEAN YOUR VASES. #2 Every couple days, snip off 1/4" of stem to rid your bloom of the gummed up areas. #3 Change your water every couple days to discourage the build up of these microscopic biota. Do Florlife, sugar, 7-up, aspirin or other water additives increase vase life? Dubious.**



## **CLEAR FROM THE GROUND UP**

**Leaves nearest the ground usually turn brown and cruddy first. Carefully remove these when you see the changing color. This increases air circulation, discourages mildew, and removes access points for insects. You may also see a few sprigs that are not leaves, but are actually sprouts that want to form their own branches. I usually take**

**these off as soon as I spot them. Eventually these inchoate limbs will turn into branches with blooms, but being so low to the ground, they are very vulnerable to breaking off from gravity, extra gravity from moisture or from wind. Then you will have lost weeks of energy that could have suffused through the rest of your dahlia plant. If the sprig is sufficiently developed, you might try making a cutting. Be sure to label it.**

## **DAHLIA BONDAGE**

**Halfway through June, I began tying up my rambunctious dahlia plants. Some of them are my fault. I did not reduce all the stems to a single or double stalks which is what I usually do during field dressing. So I use a green plastic coated twine that lasts through several seasons. Sarah found some fatter plastic “string” at Sloat that is great. Phil uses velcro strips! In the old days..... my mentors used run nylon stockings. (Imagine!) Fat pipe cleaners cosset a rambling dahlia, too. The idea is to support the heavier branches as they grow. Too thin a string and it will garrote your burgeoning darling. Some people use 2-3 stakes per plant and build a support corral around it. Tomato cages prove another option.**

## **DOUBLE CHECK**

**Walk through your patch with your ADS Classification Book. Double check that the flower you see is what the ADS says it should be. If Blomquist Candy Corn is yellow,**

**something is wrong. It should be orange with white tips. Is it something else? Can you key it out? Come to the Dell on a Wednesday or Saturday morning to learn to use your ADS Classification Book to figure out the correct name of various varieties. Perhaps, it's a solid orange? It might have reverted; something in its genes changed. This is called a SPORT. Sometimes sports are terrific. For example when Spartacus showed up lavender or white and became Vassio Meggos or Louis Meggos! Other times variegated often "loose" their splatter of color and become uni-tinted. Vernon Rose goes solid magenta or spectacular Rolf turns drab orange. Sigh. I also set up an xl grid with the cultivar names down the left side and across the top I have the position in my plot, ADS classification number, size, form, color and source (where I got the variety from). Because it's XL, I can slice and dice on every column. How many annenomes do I have? How few formal decs? Only 1 Stellar!!! yikes. That will be a priority to buy next year. Why do I have 5 Jessicas and only 1 Blomquist Candy Corn? This XL array helps me decide how to plant my last 7 spots on NEEDED varieties and how to start thinking of next year already.**

## **ROGUE!**

**I've got some tough decisions ahead: what to throw out. Some of my plants look a little stunted and unhappy. I tried Captain Jack and Spinosad to see if the problem might just be early insect damage. Alas, no improvement**

**in the new leaves. I will pull these plants out and NOT COMPOST them; they will go straight to THE GARBAGE. Whatever is making them gnarly, I don't want even in my compost mix. The good news is I still have a bunch of INSURANCE plants that are well rooted and ready to plug and play. I am still thinning out some of the sophomore clumps with too many stems. Some of the rarer ones will be made into pot roots to propagate next year for our Society. If you are curious how to do this, come by on a Wednesday or Saturday morning and learn how. There are still some plants for sale in case you, too, have some disappointments to replace.**

### **DAHLIA DIPLOMACY**

**Dahlias reverberate with EVERYONE! Even a single bloom in a milk carton vase can change a whole office, library or senior center. Do you have a favorite coffee shop? You might be amazed how their entire clientele lights up with joy over a dahlia or two. Erik's hospital checks out the radiology department when his magnificent blooms begin appearing. My neighbors love the arrival of deadheads and scarf them up fast. SHARE the glory.**

**Yours in dirt,  
Deborah**

**Photo credit: Demeter, Dietz, Gaensler, Kaiser, Roddan, Smith**

**Snail Mail Darling: Patricia**

**Webmaster: Devorah**





