



Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



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NEXT MEETING

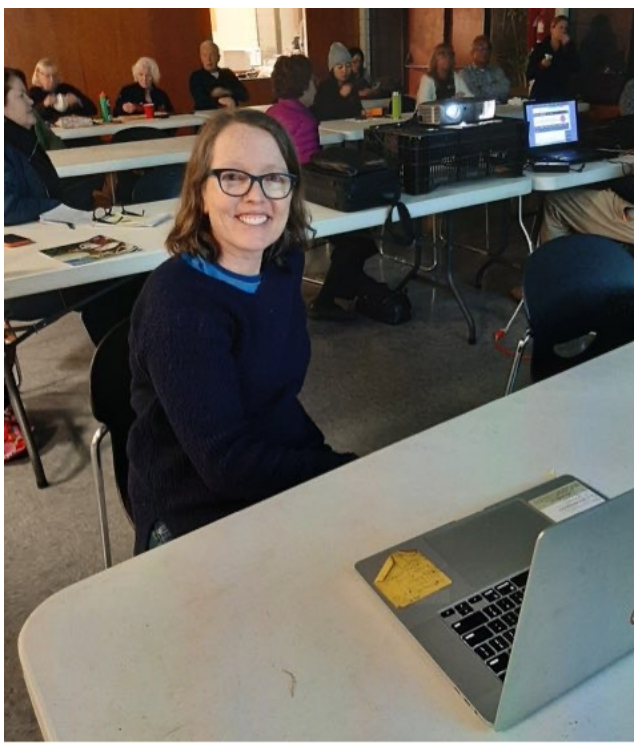
Tuesday March 14 @7:30 @ 9th and Lincoln. Program: How to plant. Bring your Secret Sauce Recipes..... Please bring any sprouted tubers or cuttings you'd like to donate to DSC. We'll put them up for immediate sale. (Any exchanges must take place outside our meeting room.) Who will bring Leprechaun treats for fellow DCSers to nosh upon? Our meeting Zoom link will be sent Monday, March 13. We love participation from near and far.

ADS SECRETS ILLUMINATED

Erik and Deborah walked us through various VERY USEFUL options on the American Dahlia Society's official website. The Fabulous Fifty lists the top dahlias from the 2022 shows.



Clearview Edie bloomed above the rest last year. If you are looking to fill a particular slot, Cream of the Crop lists the most award winning varieties in each category, such as B FD. Last year Gloriosa received the most blue ribbons or higher for B sized formal decoratives. If you are going to dedicate the space and resources, ministrare to THE BEST in each



category not to ho hums. Erik also treated us to the entire panoply of New Dahlia Introductions. These bespeak our future. Check these out at your leisure; some are sooo stunning. DAHLIA UNIVERSITY: Erik pointed out all the great video tutorials available about dividing, planting, and making cuttings on the ADS website. ALL FREE! We had as many people participating on Zoom as present in our Fairgrounds Meeting Room. Major kudos to Sarah for managing all the tech needed to put Erik's screen on and still capture some faces. For example, Deborah was able to show some of her first sprouting tubers safely growing in a milk carton up in her loft.

VALENTINE'S NOSH

Thank you to Tony for his macaroons and to Pat for her box of Sees Candies. Kathy's cupcakes were works of edible art. Jenna brought miscellaneous Valentine's



chocolates including a couple bags of pregnant m&m's called Cadbury SnoBalls. Too good. Several other wonderful treats sustained studying DCSers, so thank you to our more anonymous donors!

PANOPLY OF LOVELY DAHLIAS

Here are more dahlias nabbed during the 2022 season to tide you over yet another mud month.



OMEGA



Peaches N' Cream



Pink Ivanetti



Saltwater Taffy



PINK PEARL



Rejman s Polish Kid

IMPORTANCE OF NEW INTRODUCTIONS

Simply put, new introductions are our future. If you compare today's dahlias to those of your grandparents, ours have stronger stems, rounder profiles (compare to flat, all day sucker-like blooms), and better disease resistance. Tremendous time and expense are invested in playing the dahlia genetic lottery to produce a new introduction. Think of all the seeds which have to be grown to yield a single decent show dahlia—thousands! They have to be grown 3-4 years to prove their genes are “set” and not

fluctuating producing different sort of flowers each year. We reap the dedication and skill of our hybridizers.



WHY DO CERTAIN VARIETIES DISAPPEAR?

Think of your own dahlias. How many did not overwinter successfully? Why did they fail? Did they not produce any viable tubers? Were there but one or two tubers? Did these two tubers have such narrow necks that they shriveled up in the processing regime? Did they rot during storage? Did

they rot in the ground? Did they fail to germinate in the spring? Erik talked about reproducing dahlias like making xeroxes of a xerox. Each successive iteration loses something. Lou P tries to stave off this vanishing by choosing the Best of his admittedly already really fine dahlias. So if Lou grew 5 Eden Benarys, he will grow and take cuttings from the best of those 5. Even then disaster can occur. He can lose all of them on the cutting bench, or the crows and ravens can raven his patch. Check your new ADS Classification book (which should have arrived mid-February if you are an ADS member); check out the dates of introduction. There are a few which harken back to the 80's (Jessica) and fewer yet who go back to the 40's (Miss Rose Fletcher); and a couple poms still grown from the 1920's. But sooo few. There are so many ways to lose a dahlia variety.

STROLL OF DISCOVERY



Last summer, Deborah led a tour of our Dahlia Dell for the volunteers and staff of the DeYoung Museum. This February, they reciprocated. Kathi led us through the stages of discovery of several potentially overlooked paintings in our priceless Americana collection. She pointed out the differences in the Joshua Johnson portrait of a young girl and the snazzy portraiture of European-trained Earl. All had a subject holding an iconographic object, a drapery, a glimpse of Nature, and triangular divisions. But the Johnson was a little less sophisticated. Kathi informed us that Joshua Johnson was born



into slavery and painted when the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place. She drew us in to a beach scene with Roman ruins in the back ground, only to look more carefully and discover San Quentin! Kathi contrasted the globs of white Sargent used to

depict Crystal and the slaths and jabs of Elmer Bischoff. Lastly, Kathi confronted us with a 2002 version on male/female; inside/ outside; sort of abstract/ sort of pictorial; dark blues and purples/ warm yellows and oranges. Our Dell volunteers learned a lot.

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST DAHLIA CONFERENCE

San Leandro hosted a fabulous full day conference for dahlia growers from all over California. Mark Oldenkamp, the ADS First Vice President, presided. Stephen Andrews, a professor from UC Berkeley, shared two hours of soil talk. His mantra: Compost Compost Compost! He began by warning, "Soil is not infinite. We're loosing it a rapid rate."

Because 25% of global diversity is in the soil, we have to protect and cultivate what we have. His good news: The system works. Dr. Andrews means that dirt wants to become soil; if you compost well, the fungi, bacteria and nematodes do what they do to reduce the pile and turn it into black gold. A 1% compost addition will yield 4 times the water carrying capacity, so composting will save with our water bills as well as nurture healthier dahlias.





SOYELL OR JUST DIRT?



ASTOUNDING RAFFLE

Ellen, Chris Dix, Beverly Dahlstedt, Frances Kawaguchi and



Quamron organized goodie bags, dahlia buckets and an astounding array of raffle treasures

which included containers from the late Dean Barns and huge bags of fertilizer from Ken Masurat's estate. Please check out Lobaugh, Stonehouse, Swan Island



and Dan's Dahlias; they all donated gift certificates. We want to support the commercial people who support us! The



Oldenkamps donated many cool pot roots and Kristine Albrecht brought cuttings and tubers as well as two of her books on Dahlia Breeding. Rachel Perls generously gave a print of one of her amazing dahlia paintings. Whole cutting implimenta were



won and lots of tech gear as well as dahlia puzzles and umbrellas, chocolates and wine. Zowie. If this weren't enough, the silent auction had MORE temptations. All through the day, raffle tickets were drawn



and people were delighted with astounding choices.

KRISTINE ALBRECHT

Using her husband Brion's exquisite photos, Kristine walked us through her hybridization project. She began with photos of species dahlias from the Genome Project, which contained primarily dominant traits. Nature devolves to the simplest dominant traits: small, open centered, fragile but plentiful. The dahlias we grow are compilations of many many recessive genes. Thus, out of thousands of seedlings, only a few will warrant growing again the second year. Kristine stressed hybridizing with a goal in mind; hers were for show and for cut flower sales. She walked us through her process of hand pollination. Check out her Instagram and short videos at santacruzdahlias.com



GROWING QUALITY DAHLIAS

Iris Wallace led off the panel discussion with encouragement to plant a cover crop, test your soil and liberally use compost. Chris Dix urged us to start with superior tubers, “Grow the BEST.” Deborah Dietz talked about experimenting and learning from failure. She stressed how asking questions and visiting other dahlia plots increases intellectual “cross pollination.”



EXHORTATION TO DAHLIA SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA MEMBERS

We, DSC, will host this extravaganza next year. Please begin thinking how you can help. What can you donate for the raffle? What businesses do you have contacts with who would donate to our conference? What committees could you enhance: food, raffle, speaker, goodie bag, Tech, communication or??? Planning starts NOW.

PARADE OF



CHAMPIONS



Here is another tronche of outstanding dahlias from last year. Check thedahliaaddict.com for their availability.



Skipley Domino



Seftin Silvertop



September Morn



17/08/2022



SLAVY SLAVCHEV

WOLFE LANE SCAVAGING

When Kevin moved to San Diego, he took his favorite dahlias with him. He urged Deborah to take the rest to share with DSC. So Deborah and Sarah pulled several tubers and carried armfuls of green rebar to her faithful dahlia mobile, thinking it must have been the warmest day this year! However, there's still more in the ground. Are there any spry volunteers who can climb and balance on the steep tiers to help dig up and convey the clumps to the car? Please call Deborah to set up a convenient day to help: 415-816-2118. And in San Diego, Kevin's preparing fabulous raised beds and sunk a huge plot lined with hardware cloth against gophers. Wow!



COOL NEW WEBSITES

Abby, 8, and her big brother Colin, 12, have built the most amazing website, [click here](#) to see it!. Check it out! Maybe Colin could consult for DSC, he's so professional already! Sarah has also built a website dedicated to our Dahlia Dell. Hope you will send her photos as things develop so others can enjoy our Dell from afar. <https://www.dahliadell.org/>

ADS PHOTO CONTEST

Congratulations to Louise and Deborah for their wins in the annual ADS Photo Contest from over 1200 pictures submitted. Check out Louise's cool darkroom design of Valley Porcupine. Deborah



snapped Sarah at our 2022 Photo Op Stop to win Best Dahlias with People category. Please take pix during our upcoming

season to enter this great competition (and also share with your benevolent dahlia society newsletter.) See all the winners at the ADS website.



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Ted reports: Larry got up at 4 am to be ready for a 5 am opening of a dahlia farm on the east coast. For two years when he went online when they opened, a bit after the opening bell, all the dahlias were sold out. This year he was determined to get them, and HE DID! We will have a very good nap this afternoon! I am trying to get him to slow down. One hundred plus is just too many and the water bill is astronomical. He is having a lot of fun, however, and dozens of people keep stopping us when we are out in the garden to tell us how much they enjoy his efforts. Now, mine

is to prepare the soil. That is a very big and important job. I use a lot of Malibu (cow compost) which is expensive but very effective. As you well know, the dis-branching,



disbudding, staking and grooming is a very laborious job but the secret to the beautiful flowers.

Sonia is amazed to have blooms from her cuttings under lights. She reports that Abby likes to check her tubers and already has several seedlings started.

DAHLIA DELL DOINGS

Sarah appreciated all the help from Lucy, Deborah and Brigid, pulling her clumps





from the hillside. She set up an assembly line to divide them in her sunny back yard. Deborah helped carve up a couple of the gnarlier root masses. Then Sarah parked her milk cartons in a third story room with lots of sun-facing windows for germination. Unfortunately, when she checked her cartons, they were sweating: the lids seeping moisture. Problem? Her potting soil which looked pretty good, was too wet. So Sarah had to dump everything out, put in dryer soil and use a toothbrush with bleach to remove any mold growing on her damp tubers. Good lesson, Sarah.

MARCHING INTO MARCH

Last chance to add chicken manure. Even commercial fowl gunk is HOT—meaning that it could burn wee roots of new dahlias. It's best to give chicken spread at least 3 weeks—preferably more—to cool down before planting. Toss your compost pile one more time before using it on your April planting beds.

GERMINATION?

How do you get your tubers to sprout? Think like a tuber. What do you want? Firstly, dark. You want to believe you are in a wonderful garden deep in the soil. You can achieve this by keeping your vermiculite shoe boxes closed or your milk cartons covered. Secondly, you want heat. Dahlias sprout between 62-67 degrees. Heating pads tend to be a bit too warm and can actually bake your babies at this stage. My loft seems to be just perfect.



Try the top of your refrigerator. Peggy uses the top of her hot water heater. Do you have a shelf in a closet in your highest bedroom? Do you have some space in your attic? Our San Francisco soil stays a lovely 48-53 degrees year round; you could wait forever for tubers to germinate in the garden. To give any clumps you've left in your patch a boost, turn a 5-gallon pot over the top. This protects your clump from some rain and some bugs AND acts as a mini-greenhouse to warm up that little bit of perfect dahlia paradise to lure a couple sprouts up.

Thirdly, moisture. Most tubers contain enough of their own moisture that you do NOT need to spritz; darkness and heat should be enough. However, if you want to try an experiment when most of your tubers have already emerged, try this: cover your laggards with a damp (not wet!) tea towel and put in the proverbial warm spot. Every 2-3 days lightly spritz the towel until you see some action. Alas, not all tubers will sprout no matter what sort of cossetting and encouraging ploys you try.

Check your vermiculite. Have some of your tubers sprouted? If so, pot them up in a 4x4, a milk carton or a gallon pot. Place in a warm, protected spot like your greenhouse window, cold frame, greenhouse or window sill. They want a little heat and a lot of light



at this stage. **Label! LABEL NOW!**

It's amazing how easily you can lose track of names.....

Have you sprouts in your garden??? Yay! But beware. **EVERYTHING** loves dahlias at this delectable stage. Get a copper collar around them. Greg found great copper flashing tape at the hardware store. Put out slug/snail/earwig bait **NOW**. I like Sluggo Plus. It is a little cheaper at Costco, but still pricey. Sluggo Plus purports to be safe for birds and pets. So so. Smaller pets or larger appetites can get in trouble with this and end up at the vet. Know your priorities. Diatomaceous earth also dissuades slugs and snails but hardly deters rapacious earwigs. Know your enemies and plan accordingly.

Start an XL spreadsheet. Distinguish between those you will plant and those you will donate to our dahlia society. I like variety names along the left side and ADS #, size, color, source and place in my garden along the top. This is also helpful if you are trying to trade dahlias with someone else.

Apical stem cuttings

When I get a leggy cutting with 5 sets of leaves, I snip the top off just above the second from the bottom set of leaves. Then I cut back to



1/8" under the third set of leaves and snip those two leaving the node intact on the stem. This wee sprig I put into loose rooting soil in a 1x1x3" pot or a starter cube of peat moss. I wet it thoroughly and put it under lights. Some people cover their cutting box with a transparent shield to maintain better humidity.

Yours in dirt,
Deborah



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