



# *Dahlia Society of California Newsletter*



**NEXT MEETING: MAY 9** at 7:30 PM at 9th and Lincoln. Program: Professor Dietz will delight us with her slide show, Dahlia 101, covering all the basics as well as some fun dahlia trivia. This is the meeting to invite all your friends, relatives, neighbors and buddies from work to. Moreover, we will have more cuttings from our illustrious cutting crew and other treasures that were not quite ready to sell at our Big Tuber Sale. Please bring your late sprouting tubers and your extra cuttings. We will send out a zoom link the day before our meeting. Our tech people say they will try to hook the feed directly to Deborah's slide show, so those at home will have front row seats! Who will bring noshes for hungry dahlia growers?

## **VARIOUS STAGES OF READINESS**

At our April meeting, Erik brought several great examples of tubers to show how to check for eyes, pot up, and water. He erected an ingenious little green house with chop sticks and a clear plastic bag. What a great way to begin hardening off dahlia plants but still protect



them gently. Erik passed around some of Liebe's beautiful tubers from Blue Dot Farm.



Tim brought a box of wonderful tubers from his city garden on Brotherhood Way and showed us his amazing xl spread sheet complete with photos of each flower. Deborah shared more milk cartons of luscious plants



for sale. John and Annette say that they gobbled up extra Sluggo Plus at Costco and will sell the big containers at our next meeting for \$10 each. Such an incredible deal!

Jenna passed around the flyers she's been posting everywhere to alert people about the Tuber sale. She encouraged everyone to use all their social media methods at hand to interest friends and public in our sale. Pat says she's emailed 1000 people! Jenna and

Laura posted signs at the Dahlia Dell including one of those black squares that one just points ones camera at and up pops information about the Dahlia Society of California and it upcoming Tuber Sale. Wow. Modern Technology.

Thank you to Cara for her beautiful kumquats! What a great surprise. Thank you, too, to Jenna for the Turkish Delights and to Peggy for giving us healthier options with watermelon. We especially gobbled up Tony's Lindt chocolate balls!! Oh My!

### **HOW WARM IS IT?**

Soil temperature maps from Sonya

Sonya shared this great map guesstimating the soil temperature in various places around the US based on weather patterns.

Remember, most tubers need 62-65 degrees to germinate. Is it warm enough to plant tubers in the ground instead of in milk cartons and pots? Maybe in the South Bay and certain sunny spots in Marin and Walnut Creek.....

<https://www.greencastonline.com/tools/soil-temperature?fbclid=IwAR3aDIReaXoAZwEEYnulrn7VsgjUFzOabKVjD4n6tJknqVLiCv5E0NDswiM>

### **GENOME PROJECT**

We have very exciting news: the dahlia cultivar 'Edna C' was sequenced in January 2023. This is the first full dahlia genome ever produced. We are currently starting Phase Three of the ADS Genome Project and we need financial help to achieve the goal of seeing this project through.

We are asking for your help to fund the last year of a five year Ph.D. student's stipend. ADS has raised funds to support the stipend for the first four years and is working to raise \$20,000 for the last year. Without a dedicated graduate student, the labor-intensive process of assembling the genome data would not move forward. Your donation will be added to the \$205,000 ADS has already raised. Please consider discussing a potential donation to

**this project with your society members at your next society meeting.**

**Here's a short history on the ADS Genome Project: In 2016, Dr. Walbot of Stanford University and ADS started the genome project based on her inspiration. She generously worked pro bono to see this project through Phase One. Species dahlia seeds were collected in Mexico and grown by ADS volunteers and at Stanford University. Leaves from 15 species dahlias and 11 modern dahlias were analyzed using RNA sequencing. The surprising result: modern and species dahlias are genetically indistinguishable. This suggests that rather than multiple genetic lines, modern and species dahlias spring from one common gene pool, similar to what we know about dogs: one common gene pool with a wide variation in characteristics.**

**The ADS Genome Project is now based at the Harkess Laboratory at Auburn University and HudsonAlpha, in Alabama. HudsonAlpha is the largest genome sequencing lab in the country. Ph.D. student Zach Meharg, with the help of specialized software will now assemble the chromosomes so scientists can ultimately study the dahlia. In lay terms, Zach's job will now be to assemble a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without having the picture on the front of the box. To make his job even more complex, because dahlias are octoploids, there will be eight identical sets of puzzle pieces in the box. Zach will also resolve the dahlia family tree utilizing high-quality DNA samples and identify the ancestors of 'Edna C.' He is also planning a similar sequencing strategy for 600 leaf samples taken from the 2021 ADS National Show in Ohio.**

**If you'd like to read a full history of this project [CLICK HERE](#).**

**To see a short video from the scientists working on the dahlia genome [CLICK HERE](#).**

To learn even more about this Project, visit the ADS Website: [www.dahlia.org](http://www.dahlia.org) and click on “Research.”

Thank you for considering a gift to support these efforts.

-Kristine Albrecht, ADS Genome Project Chair

To donate online [CLICK HERE.](#)

### **DAHLIA TALK**

**A reminder: Dan Baulig hosts a national meeting on the fourth Tuesday of every month where people can zoom in, listen, ask questions, help answer questions, and learn much about our favorite flower and the people who grow them.**

Topic: DAHLIA TALK Zoom Meeting

Time: This is a recurring meeting, on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00PM Pacific Time

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87070954664?  
pwd=OUhWOG90UUphNENiMU5sWHZpczFEdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87070954664?pwd=OUhWOG90UUphNENiMU5sWHZpczFEdz09)

### **MILL VALLEY SCHOOL DAHLIA PROJECT**

**Anita reports on a project she holds dear:**

**Dahlias at The Mill Valley Children's Garden (aka The Edna Garden) Dahlias have been a staple at The Mill Valley Children's Garden on Edna Maguire's Elementary campus for over 30 years. But our flowers have had boom years since 2020 when a new group of parent volunteers and intensified gardening as response to Covid took over our garden. The school garden responded to**



the 2020 pandemic by becoming a production farm donating over 4000 pounds of fresh produce to communities in need in Marin County. We also started to grow more flowers as a way to attract pollinators and as a revenue source

during our spring plant sale. In 2022, we grew over 80 dahlias in 5-gallon pots above ground. Pots were chosen to avoid gophers and also not to take away in ground space from vegetables. Over 40 different varieties of dahlias were grown. Tubers over winter as is above ground. We start dividing clumps in late January. Each tuber is "planted" in a small pot or 1-gal pot and kept dry in our greenhouse. However, we quickly outgrew our greenhouse space because we have to make room for veggie starts. We had to move our pots to the most protected wall in our outdoor garden classroom; we cover all the pots with





several layers of agricultural cloth. As of March, some dahlias are "waking" up. We have potted up a little over 300 tubers!!! And we still haven't divided all our 2022 pots. In mid-April we will make an inventory of what is "awake". Our goal is to plant close to 80 tubers in pots again and we will sell the rest. We are becoming more selective of our varieties and keeping better records of what gives us

that wow factor. We look forward to getting some winners at SF Dahlia tuber sale in April! When kids come back in late summer and our summer veggies are in full swing we add cut flowers to our veggie market sale. We also offer bouquets for teachers to take to their classroom. Kids love the different colors and shapes and so do their parents. As our garden program becomes more established (post Covid lockdown) we are introducing our kids to all aspects of gardening and farming including floriculture. If you're ever in Mill Valley and walk past our garden, wave and say hello; there is usually someone in the garden. We make sure to put the dahlias where they are visible from the public paths adjacent to the garden. Another way to know what's happening is to follow us on social media on Instagram @millvalleychildrensgarden

## **TUBER STAMPEDE!**

Sarah gasped at her first Tuber Sale, "It all happened so fast! I was amazed at the timeline and system that was put in place to make this happen. The work started months ago and the ballet of



forethought and attention to detail was a sight to behold! The actual sale to the public felt like an afterthought. The tuber and plant sale was testament to the organizational powers of the organizers and the generosity of the DSC members.” “Fast and Furious,” pronounced Karen.

On Friday, Lou, Tinnee, Jerry, Jenna, John (with a cast on his arm!) and Tony transported cuttings from the greenhouse and staged them in our meeting room until the auditorium was empty and they could all be transferred there. They put up all those tables! They sorted all those cuttings by size and variety!

By 7am Saturday morning, volunteers were already stacking plants and tubers against the wall. Lisa had a whole wagon full of beautifully labeled and bagged tuber trove. Each time a new car





drove in, volunteers offered to carry whatever. Although chilly, people were awake, excited and so willing to help out however they could. When the doors opened, Deborah used Lou's signs to designate where the tubers should go. Veterans who knew their



sizes and forms integrated the plants and cuttings into the army of greenhouse cuttings. Tinnee set up photos and cognoscenti



placed them correctly. Many wonderful hands labeled Liebe's huge contribution of tubers, transforming her 2-letter designations: MN became Mingus Nicole. Yet more helpers placed the labeled tubers in individual boxes and organized the various sections of BB, Pom, WL et. al. Suddenly we were told that our rental of the huge auditorium did NOT include the parking lot which had been sold

to Earth Day food trucks. Everyone had to move their cars. Undaunted, the great buzz and co-operation continued. Who hung our beautiful banner? Who set up our membership table? The palpable energy in the room rose with each new job. What



splendid attitudes: do whatever needs to be done!

Deborah gave great thanks to all participants for working so well and so hard to get things arranged in such a short amount of time. The co-operation, troubleshooting and



self-initiative were exceptional! She encouraged inviting the public to the free lecture at our May Meeting where there will be a bunch more dahlias to buy. She introduced Steve who took it upon himself to hire a designer and make wonderful T-shirts “ Celebrate



Diversity. Plant Dahlias. SFdahlias.org” in pink, green, and wheat colors. (We will have more available at our May meeting: \$12 for members and \$20 for friends.)

Then we went shopping! This is one of the perks for members who contribute tubers, cuttings, or services during the year to boost our beloved Dahlia Society of California. They filled Lou’s “shopping carts,” the cardboard boxes from Safeway. Joe was inundated with credit card purchasers. Deborah and Paula received cash and checks and

cash and ca\$h. Our members were delighted with the choice of cuttings and the fine quality of the tubers. (Please make a vow that you will donate some of either to our sale next year!)





Whilst the private shopping was perpetrated, Erik greeted the long line of hopefuls outside. Fortunately, it was a beautiful day and everyone was in a wonderful mood. Erik told warned them that AA dahlias yield far fewer cut flowers than BB or WL or





the open centered types. He explained our pricing: \$10 AA, A, B and milk cartons cuttings; \$8 the rest of the cuttings; \$4 for named tubers; \$2 unnamed tubers and unnamed cuttings. Compared to the wild prices on line, these were DEALS. (C'mon down!) Our doors

opened promptly at 9:30. Mayhem ensued.

Thank you to our expert counters who used Tinnee's check-out forms to make things easier for our cashiers. Who knew that they were being helped by a professional comptroller, a high Tech exec, or a Federal Bank auditor? Sometimes it was tricky to figure out which were AA or other....As one thrifty grower was checking out, she asked Deborah about a little brown spot on the leaf of a KA's Cloud cutting. "Since this looks a little diseased, might you discount it 50%?" Deborah said that since this variety was selling for \$30-40 a TUBER on line, she held a DEAL in her hand. If





she was worried, she did not have to buy it. Good try, though. The line for credit cards quickly barricaded Joe behind a crowd. However, they were patient and so glad to have been able to find such wonderful dahlias. Next year we'll need a venmo as well as

a credit card official. So many dahlia ambassadors pointed out the eyes on tubers; wrote extra instructions on milk cartons; and patiently explained differences to knowledge-hungry gardeners. Children knew the names of the dahlias they were seeking! Amazing.

In slightly more than an hour, we were down to a dozen cuttings on a single table. All the ADS





**Classification Books were sold. The blitz buyers cleaned us out! Wow. Fast and Furious, indeed, Karen. A few dazed and amazed shoppers wandered in after 10:30 and were grateful for the final final few plants.**

**Slowly, as the hubbub subsided, some of us realized that DSCers had brought doughnuts, coffee, and exquisite chocolates. We noshed as we cleaned up. By 11:30 Erik, Shelly and Tinnee double-checked an empty but clean expanse.**

**When asked about her first Tuber Sale, Cara looked back, “I enjoyed helping out and meeting new members and seeing the excitement the sale brought to the public. I talked to many people who traveled quite a distance to get there. There was one guy who actually was running when the doors opened!” Indeed, a flight attendant flew in from Idaho; a mom and son drove over from**



Oregon. Several people planned their trips to San Francisco to include this wild morning of tuber frenzy. Thank you to everyone who made this the **MOST SUCCE\$FUL TUBER SALE OF ALL TIME!!!!** Yowza!

## HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



When asked what this photo showed, Katy explained, “Just where I did my last dividing. I actually got a lot of great looking tubers but I’m always surprised at the amount of green waste produced.”

Lola kicked her public garden space up a notch with new planting boxes lined with gopher-

thwarting mesh and all new potting soil.



Wow. She had spectacular dahlias last year despite being plagued by critters. Good luck, Lola!



Kalpana sent in photos of her tubers jump-started under lights. Her question: Where should she cut to “stop” this plant and still be able to use the snipped off portion for making another cutting? Deborah advised that she have at least one if not two sets of





leaves after she's removed the lowest set from the cutting and still leave one to two sets on the plant. Maybe she'll have rooted cuttings for us in May?



Phil and Marilyn said that their double

white dahlia tree loved all the rain this year and grew over 20 feet tall. They brought a whole box of canes to our tuber sale. Thank you.

Young Abby could not wait for blooms, so she bought a flowering border dahlia.

## DAHLIA DELL DOINGS

Finally the rains abated leaving a successful abundance of weeds in their wake. Lou wanted to rototill his half of the oval again. Since Sarah knew that Lou's





churning machine can't get close to the edges, she dragooned her family into weeding the entire



circumference of Lou's patch. Walter said, "Pulling weeds is hard." Meanwhile on the hillside, Erik and Jenn eradicated most of the weeds in their section. Sue

not only rid her whole half of the hillside of extra

uninvited greenery, she also pulled all the cruddy junk from in front. So when Tang saw that, she pulled out the entire pasture in front of Sarah's section. It looked like so much fun, that Tang got help from a very young weeder. Jerry and Tim helped Pat and Tinnee remove all the weeds at the east end so we can see several returning sophomore dahlias beginning. Sarah reports 14 of her 38 have sprouted. Erik felt around and



knows his are coming. Joe has several poking their little leaves out. Deborah says more than 100 are up despite the wretched ravens who are wreaking havoc again. In their search for worms, they dig under the tuber clumps and toss the tubers out of the way. They snip off the new green stems and just



leave them withering in the light. Sooooo infuriating. A huge pile of hot hot! compost sat outside Lou's area. But it was not for the Dell. A big bulldozer scooped it all up for the meadow beds in front of the Conservatory. Check out this map of Golden Gate

Park sent out by their media machine. Look at the big box in the upper right corner: Temporary Dahlia Dell! Temporary???? What haven't they told us??? Erik thinks perhaps this means there's a temporary stop for the shuttle???? Cross your petals, he's right. Bright and early, Peggy and Kevin arrived to





**painstakingly pry out all the crusty weeds stuck in the outside**



**perimeter of the oval. Thank You!**

## MARVELOUS MAY

May is marked by the most marvelous madness! Because of our wet wet wet winter and cold nasty spring, we are still planting in May. We should have our watering systems in place. We **MUST** draw a map; perhaps devise an XL spread sheet; and begin planning for next year's pot roots! We could do our first pinching back. Definitely, we could spray our first dahlia cocktail.

### Planting

Planting tubers is different than planting cuttings or milk cartons with tubers in them. Tubers have **NO ROOTS**. They cannot absorb moisture. They should **NOT** be watered when you plant. Wait for wee green feelers before you pour a wee bit of water. How to plant cuttings? Remember, cuttings have **NO TUBERS**, only tiny hair-thin roots. They **MUST** have water at least once, if not twice, a day until they take off. Milk cartoned tubers will produce a whole brick of roots. Tear the milk carton apart and drop the mass of roots into a prepared hole deep as the first leaf. These should be watered immediately. The secret with all these types is to closely observe your dahlia. Is it nicely erect? Tall and happy? If so, **DO NOTHING**. If, however, it's a little droopy or slightly wilted, then give it a little water. So in the beginning, if you are planting cuttings, tubers and milk cartons all in the same plot, you will have to customize according to each plant's needs. This will all even out in a month or so, no worries.

### WATERING

What sort of watering system are you using? It's best and certainly easiest to have your system in place before you plant. I have pic pipes with slightly raised emitters. Pat and the Hillside Gang use a drip system. They like the emitters which can be individually adjusted as to how much water they dispense. Lou insists on watering by hand so that he can assess each plant at least once a week.

### MAP

I keep track 2 different ways. 1. I have a clip board with a page for every row at the Dell. I write down the names in order down the row as I plant.



2. I enter all varieties in an XL spreadsheet including the geographic designation like Row A, position 3. Pat and Sarah draw pictorial maps of their plots. LABEL! I like writing in pencil on venetian blinds. Lauren ruefully admitted that he resorted to an industrial strength Sharpie last year; they all faded by the time he wanted to divide. He swears he'll use a pencil this year. Paula and Tony use the upright plastic demarkers which have an oval atop a spike. They are usually white or aluminum and can be written on with pencil or pressed into the soft flat metal.

Lou, Sue and Pat make laminated markers which can be easily read by the public.

### **STOPPING OR PINCHING OUT**

I recommend waiting to do this until you get the first inkling of a bud. This will probably be a semi-crummy flower which will consume a lot of your little plant's resources. So instead of spending that energy on a crapy little bloom, nip it off very early. I snip below the first pair of leaves; this usually means I am taking the central bud, perhaps also the two little buds on each side of the central bud and the two little leaves that accompany it. Thus all that energy will go straight to the roots and to the firm foundation of your clump. The next round of multiple blooms will be marvelous!

### **COCKTAIL TIME?**

These early plants are so very vulnerable to so many forms of predation. Check out this ladybug life cycle. Protect these! They will eat aphids voraciously! I noted at the Dell the last week in

April, that the first generation of red



lady bugs is out looking for bad beasties to eat. Be gentle. You do NOT want earwigs. Earwigs can turn



your new plants into costly salad overnight. Sluggo Plus will take care of ear wigs, snails and slugs. Unfortunately, the Ravens and other birds have developed a taste for

Sluggo! Go figure. I am making copper rings from the copper flashing tape Geoff brought me. Snail slime reacts with this quite uncomfortably, dissuading most of these marauders. Going out with a flashlight after dark and plucking these nuisances off is very satisfying.

Starting the first week in May, I will begin spraying with a very mild cocktail: a 1/3 strength Stylett Oil to prevent mildew, 1/2 strength liquid fertilizer for a little boost, and 1/3 strength Spinosad to repel bugs. My 2-gallon electric sprayer makes this so simple and so quick.

### **GENEROSITY WITH INSURANCE**

Because of our wet and cold winter and spring, so many tubers are late to eye up. I brought everything I had ready to plant to our Tuber Sale. Thank you to Sarah and Lucy who both came over on multiple occasions to help divide. Jen thoughtfully came over



Friday and carried all 11 flats of plants and tubers and loaded my car. But now I have so many more wonderful varieties finally getting with the growing program. So I will bring a lot of them to our May meeting and also to the Dell on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. If you find yourself with late-starters, please consider donating them to our May meeting. Do, however, keep 5-10% as backup insurance in case something were to befall your best plans. I transfer my insurance plants from their 4x4s or milk cartons into 1-3 gallon pots and treat them like pot roots for next season.

### GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS

Remember all those amazing gardens I toured last September when I went on Dahlia Safari in Portland? Larry, Mark, Max, Bob, Dan and Vicky got together and sent me a box of their coolest



tubers. Soo very kind and generous and FUN. How wonderful to have a garden full of NEW varieties! Each visit to the Dell will feel like Christmas!

**Yours in dirt,**  
Deborah

**Photo credits: Dibner, Dietz, Fjelstul, Frank, Gaensler, Nelson, Petit, Phan, Shepard, Smith, Tobiasen, Warden**



**Super Proofer: Steve**

**Webmaster: Payam and Laura**

**Membership: Debbie**

