



# Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



**Next Meeting: December 12, at 6:30 PM at 9th and Lincoln. **HOLIDAY PARTY!!!** Please bring a dish to share with your fellow hungry gardeners. Serving spoons welcome. Your benevolent Dahlia Society of California (and Jenna) will provide plates, utensils, napkins and table cloths. You may also bring a gift (@ \$10) to contribute to our infamous Present Predation game. In the past, DSC members have stolen planted pots of narcissi, dahlia calendars, shovels, loppers, dividing chisels, vases, and even a Warriors T shirt. Your creative gift should be wrapped. Gifting is optional; you may opt out of our larcenous exchange and still chow down on holiday cheer. Glad rags and seasonal garb are encouraged and enjoyed by all; the brighter, the glitzier, the crazier the better. 'Tis the Season!**

## **THE EYES HAVE IT**

Once again our own Obi Wan Kenobi, Lou Paradise, showed us his 2-shovel technique for digging up clumps. First he digs a circle of straight down jabs @12" around the clump.





**This severs any extended roots. Then he does another circuit, “jiggling” the clump. Lastly, he uses two opposing shovels to prize up the root mass. He warns “Do not lift out using the stalk. You break necks that way.” Instead, lift from the bottom, underneath the roots. Lou showed us the variety of tools he uses to divide, including a hardwood block, scissors, a hammer, and 3 knives: a linoleum knife, a Canning or Apricot knife, and a smaller, exceedingly sharp artist’s slasher. Lou dips his tools in a bleach solution between varieties to prevent the spread of disease. Because Lou had just dug these clumps, the eyes were marvelously visible near the stalk. Before Lou began surgery, he applied some heavy tape to his dominant thumb “for a little extra protection, just in case.” After Lou has severed all the viable tubers, he soaks them in a solution of 10% bleach for 10 minutes.**



Then he daubs the exposed wounds in cinnamon. He used to use Captan, a virulent fungicide; but cinnamon is safer “and smells better.” Then he labels each tuber using a Bottle-of-Ink-in-a-Pencil, which writes only on wet surfaces. When you dig the mother tuber a year later, the name can still be discerned. Julia found a link to Swan Island where these magic pencils can be purchased for \$2.95 each.

<https://www.dahlias.com/indelible-ink-pencil>

Erik showed us a pen used in radiology to mark patients’ skin before a procedure. Tuber skin and people skin are similar enough..... So once dug, divided, dipped, marked and daubed in cinnamon, Lou lets his precious roots dry for two days before storing in boxes covered with peat moss. He used to use vermiculite but found peat moss as effective and less expensive. For the first two weeks he leaves the boxes open just in case there is still residual moisture. “Completely process one plant at a time!” admonished Lou. Make sure the label goes with every step

of the procedure. Ideally, one would overwinter a tuber stash in a 40 degree root cellar. But who has this luxury in San Francisco? Lou stacks his boxes in his garage which is usually around 50+ degrees and checks them often for rot, mold or germination. Lou also brought 3 seed he



ads, 2 —  
mature, dry and brown—and one green and squishy. The green one yielded immature green seeds. It could have been left in a glass of water in a warm window to finish maturing. Lou mashed up one of the brown, dry seed heads in his hands and then gently blew off the chaff. Great trick! He then showed everyone his handful of dahlia seeds. Lou lets the bees and butterflies pollinate, but chooses specific mother dahlias for their Paradise germline genetics. He explained that theoretically, a seed could develop from every ray floret, yielding up to 300 seeds! But some dahlias for some reason make far fewer. Just like the dahlias you paid the most money for seem to produce the fewest tubers. Murphy's Dahlia Laws.

## THE EYES HAVE IT

Thanks to Sarah and Pat for organizing, we voted for our officers for next year. Here is our roster:

President  
1st VP

Erik G  
Debbie F

2nd VP Jennifer T  
Treasurer Joe N  
Recording Sec Sarah S  
Corresponding Sec Deborah D

Board Members Jan. 2023-Jan. 2025  
Lou P Lucy W  
Jenna K Tara D

Board Members Jan. 2024-Jan.  
2026  
Tim W Brigid I  
Tinnee L Karen S-C

### **THANKING GENEROUS DSC MEMBERS**

Green thanks to Thomas D for bringing in several weird looking rhizomes of *Dracunculus Vulgaris*, AKA Viagra Lily. Several people

who took them home to plant, will be surprised by both the amazing size and the dreadful stench. Thanks to John D for Ghirardelli Chocolates and to Alex K for peanut butter cookies. Katy's Sees slipped down gullets before our meeting even started. Jenna's halloween candies sated the hooligan in all of us. Kauna brought food for our eyes— 3 lovely dahlias in amazingly great form for this time of year. Thank you to all who contributed to the welfare of our wonderful Dahlia Society of California.



## SAN LEANDRO COURT OF HONOR

Here is the link for the entire 2023 San Leandro Dahlia Show Court of Honor. Hope you are on this list in 2024!

<https://sfdahlias.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-SLDS-Results-summary.pdf>

### BEE Happy

Beeline  
Blooms  
Volunteer  
Experience  
by Mini K

I saw on Instagram that Beeline Blooms (down in Ben Lomond) was participating in an “Open Farm Tours” event, and I reached out to Karla, the farm owner,



to see if she needed volunteer help that day. She enthusiastically invited me with open arms, and I joined a couple of her usual Monterey Bay Dahlia Society volunteers to deadhead in 90+ degree heat, and answer any questions the public might have.

The farm was started after the CZU Lightning Complex Fire burned down much of the community, including a large grove of trees and small structures on their property. Their house was



spared, and being a novice dahlia grower (plus as a former florist and a current beekeeper), she decided to take advantage of having a new quarter-acre of sun-drenched land, and created a dahlia oasis with the goal of bringing joy and hope back to the community.

To say the farm is stunning is an understatement. The plants are thriving, growing large flowers and to extremely tall heights, all without disbudding! She has the flowers planted in color-coded sections to make it easier for customers to create

bouquets (if you want pink, you go to the pink section to see all the options). She also has a big hoop tunnel for growing gourds, which hang down like fancy baubles, though she said it's really for the water misters so people can walk through and get a cooldown when it's hot (yes, I stayed in there for a while).

Now in its second year, her farm has become a "you-pick" model, where the public can pay a flat fee to fill a mason jar up with flowers they cut themselves. She has volunteer days twice weekly to help bring her vision to life.



Karla is the sweetest (she's SO adorable and nice). She is not digging up her tubers until the spring, and offered to help dig at the Dell this fall if anyone needs assistance.

Their full story is on their website, and she posts a lot of great photos on Instagram.

[www.beelineblooms.com](http://www.beelineblooms.com)

Instagram @beeline\_blooms

### **MORE SHORT VIDEOS FROM LARRY SMITH**

<https://youtu.be/ArIf9-BBMtc>

Canby Trial Garden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXtR-Uj6UJo>

Hollyhill Tour

<https://youtu.be/Pk5QtB78IN0>

National Portland Show

### **DERRIL HART AND STANLEY JOHNSON AWARDS**

Congratulations to Allen Manuel. He's won yet another Derrill Hart Award. This time for ALLEN'S CASCADIA. It's a B LC W. He said it

easily grows to an A size. For those of you that don't know what a Derrill Hart award is, it is awarded to the cultivar that has the highest average trial garden score in the accredited trial gardens located across the United States and Canada during the previous year. Congratulations to Kristine Albrecht for her amazing KA's Khaleesi, 0101 AA ID W, winning the Stanley Johnson Award, given to the cultivar which won the most points in the





previous year's shows (excluding previous winners.) The photo of the Stanley Johnson winner always goes on the cover of the ADS Classification Book. Wow!

## FLOWERS OF THE YEAR

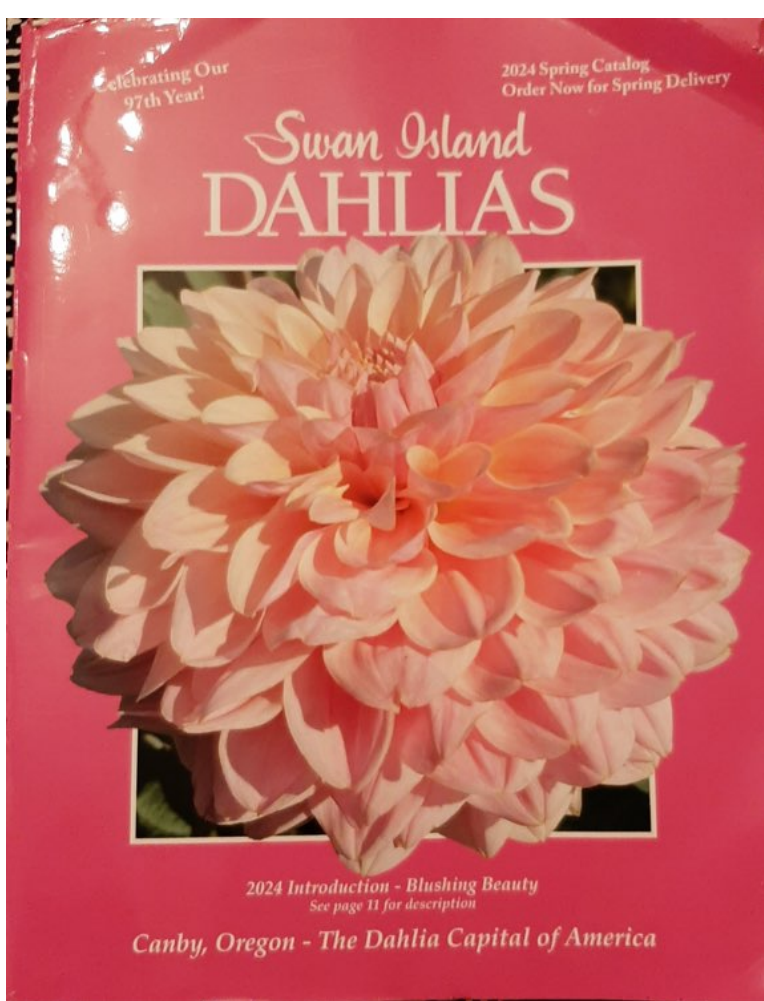
Every year DSC chooses both a fully double and an open centered dahlia to be our Flower of the Year Challenge Dahlias. Your challenge



is to grow one or two bushes each of Blomquist Jeff and Lakeview Red Eye and bring x1 and/or x3 of each to our Big Show in August. Because we will all be growing exact clones of the same cultivar, it will show how different growing conditions yield different results: soil, additives, bugs, water, sun, heat, breezes, care, staking and tying up. Please be on the lookout when buying tubers and cuttings for Blomquist Jeff and Lakeview RedEye. Please grow at least 1-2 plants and participate. The more growers who participate the more interesting and fascinating this category is.

## VISIONS OF SUGAR PLUMS

Where do you get your dahlias from each year? Please let me know the growers with whom you were most satisfied. #1 is our Dahlia Society of California Tuber Sale, April 27, 2024. San



**Leandro and Monterey Dahlia Societies also mount excellent Tuber Sales in April. However, that is a bit late, so you might be also shopping on line. Swan Island Dahlias has just released their gorgeous multipage catalog which includes size, form, date of introduction and indications for competition or happy garden ornament. This catalog is a beautiful way to practice learning your forms by examining various exquisite photos. Swan Island sells only tubers which means you have to have a reliable way of “waking them up.” Otherwise,**

**you need to find the 3 vendors who sell rooted cuttings like StoneHouse and Cowlitz. Karen S-C recommends Dahlias by Julia as well as Triple Wren, Chelan Butte Dahliary and Flower Hat. Use Thedahliaaddict.com to track down sources and to compare prices. Swan Island, Lobaugh’s, Stonehouse and Dan’s Dahlias all contributed to our successful Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference last February. Have fun contemplating luscious photos—sort of dahlia porn—but also check your ADS Classification Book to see if the fancy photo actually performed well in competition. (Trust but verify.)**



## D DAY IN GG PARK

By 8:45, Sarah, Sue and Deborah were lined up at the Nancy



Pelosi barrier awaiting a ranger escort into the Dahlia Dell. Erik, Steve, Valeria and Kevin were already hefting gopher cages full of tubers out of the Hillside. It was Hillside DigOut Day. The huge project to rebuild a sturdier, more attractive hillside spot Nov. 15-March 2024 demanded that everything be removed. Steve and Kevin were the official "Traegern," schleppers of all Erik's clumps via box and wagon up the hill to his car on Arguello. Whew!

Major effort. We reveled in the beautiful weather. Now Erik, Sarah and Sue have many hours of dividing, dipping and storing ahead. We hope see lots of their tubers at our big sale April 27th.

## \$PONSORSHIP\$

Thank you for so many people stepping up already to support our Floribunda! in August. Tara enjoys Red Velvet so much, that she has offered \$30 for the best Red Velvet specimen



to

**bloom AND \$30 for the Best Floating Red Velvet. No excuses, now, you who worry about leaves and stems.... Every year Pat underwrites Nature's Oddity and a couple named varieties. For several years, Paula has sponsored Best Junior Bloom and Best Orange Cactus. Lola will underwrite People's Choice for \$25! Steve has jumped in with \$30 for Best Floating Waterlily. Erik has traditionally anted up for Best BiColor x1, Largest, Vernon Rose and Juul's Introductions. Wow! Super supporter! Still up for grabs are: Old Fashioned Bouquet, x3 BiColors, Non-professional photo of a Dahlia Garden, a Flora and Fauna photo and a picture that captures the human interaction or reaction to dahlias. Who will support our Flower of the Year x1 and x3? Also Open Centered Flower of the Year x1 and x3? Please contact Deborah @ [dahlia.dietz@gmail.com](mailto:dahlia.dietz@gmail.com) More to come next month.**

### **SUITS YOU TO A T?**

**Wonderful stocking stuffers or self-rewarding T-shirts. CELEBRATE DIVERSITY: Plant Dahlias! Steve D underwrote the design and printing and then donated all the money to DSC! He says there are still some left in Sm, Med, Lg, XL, and XXL in pink, spring green and natural. If you want one for yourself or you are thinking of holiday presents, text Steve: 415-637-3461 with your order. Still \$12 for your first T if you are a DSC member; \$20 each for the rest and \$10 shipping.**



## LIVE TO 100?

Our Dr. Erik sent in this report from Dr. Darnell Cox, a gerontologist, who points to a scientific study showing that gardening is linked to lowering blood pressure. “In addition, having your hands working in the soil grounds the body to the earth in a process known as grounding or earthing,” says Cox. Grounding is the process by which the earth’s natural negative electrical charge helps neutralize the free radicals in our bodies, reduces inflammation, reduces cortisol levels (a stress hormone) and reduces blood



pressure. Gardening can help tone muscles, burn calories and support dexterity and balance. Gardening could add 7.5 years to one’s life!

## HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Ken and Kathy enjoyed late season dahlias displayed in their seasonal pumpkin vase. Beautiful save! Jenn T delights in her single bloom of Red Velvet; better late than never. Deborah and Steve spotted these lovely tree dahlias



**blooming at the Wilhelmina Windmill. Tall Jim stands with his taller dahlia tree.**

### **DAHLIA DELL DOINGS**

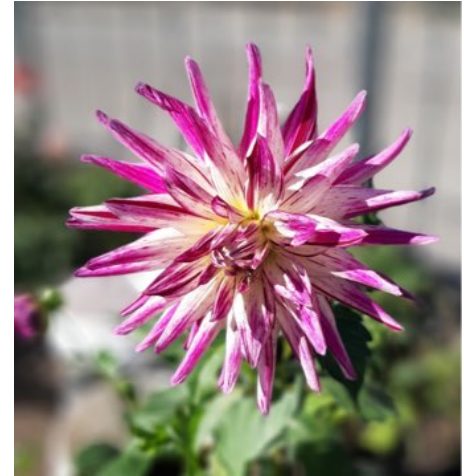
**Thanks to Ken and Kathy who brought Lou and Deborah some of their hydrogen peroxide soil cleaning product in huge 10 gallon blue containers. They hope this will be a good proof of concept experiment. Even though The Park gave us a November 15 deadline to have everything out of the Hillside, they have not begun any sort of work yet. Will they finish this huge project by the beginning of March???? Look at the magnificent bouquet Steve took to the symphony just before our rains began.**



**Lou has cut back his plants and has begun pulling out some of his clumps. Tinnee and Jerry lifted their first clumps just before Thanksgiving. Lou, Tinnee and Pat generously donate most of their tubers to the cutting project so cross your fingers for a goodly tuber crop! Deborah has tossed a couple crummy clumps; she will not do field dressing until early February. Wonderful to still see so many blooming dahlias. Deborah's Bonneventures are still over 8;" Blomquist Candy Corn and Rolf are still stunning. Love the**



dark Kenora Macop B and Hollyhill Black Beauty; AC Abby, Belle of the Ball and Hollyhill Black Widow demand disbudding! Wow!



Major



thanks to Ken for bringing the hydrogen peroxide treatment. So far so good. We'll see how things look in the spring.

### DECEMBER DECISIONS

As you begin to dig and divide your clumps, be particularly aware of gall. Usually gall looks like little white shoots that have fused together like barnacles in massive proliferation. GALL is terrible!! Immediately bag

the whole clump up with its attendant dirt and put it in the trash. NOT the compost. Then use bleach, alcohol or hydrogen peroxide



to decontaminate all your tools. Let them sit out to dry before using them again. There are no “good tubers” in a clump with gall. Alas.

### **TO DIG OR NOT TO DIG**

Will you dig all your tubers out? Only some? None? Your decision is based #1 on how well drained your soil is. Our Dell is built on a huge sand drift; its drainage is superb. We do not HAVE to dig anything up.

However, I generally begin field dressing my clumps the beginning of February. I remove about 3/4 of the tubers and leave the remainder in situ with all little and large roots still attached. This way it will sprout earlier and BLOOM earlier. I generally leave my big A and AA's in for two years undisturbed until they sprout in the spring. Then I remove all but the strongest 3-4 sprouts and turn them into cuttings in my greenhouse. I also leave anything I received as a cutting in for a second season, because cuttings often make really skinny sprawly nasty roots the first year; the second year they are much sturdier







tubers. Your DSC really needs your extra tubers for our amazing sale April 27, so please process your extras and label them. If you choose to leave yours in until spring, mulch them with grass clippings or all kinds of leaves. I often put a 5-gallon bucket over the top to act as a mini greenhouse and protect from some of the rain and crown rot. (You might put a lovely potted plant on top of the bucket to mitigate the ugliness.) Paula stacks her tuber-caged buckets and covers them with a huge tarp until spring. You might plant a cover crop with nitrogenators, plants that capture nitrogen from the air and deposit it in

the soil at the roots. In lieu of nitrogenators, sow with colorful wild flowers like poppies, calendulas or cosmos. These can be turned under when preparing to plant.

### Tuber Spa Stages

I highly recommend you follow Lou's advice about processing one clump at a time. Here are the stages. 1. Rinse off the clump and remove the stalk. 2. Use knives, scissors, or electric oscillating tools to prize off tubers. When in doubt, leave two or more tubers together rather than risk them all. 3. Place all tubers in a 10% bleach bath for at least 10 minutes. 4. Daub exposed areas of tubers in cinnamon, sulfur, or other fungicidal





substance. 5. LABEL!! 6. Let dry for 24-48 hours. 7. Completely cover in vermiculite, peat moss, wood shavings, shredded paper or sand. 8. For the first two weeks leave your bags, boxes, buckets open. 9. Store in a cool but not cold spot. Garages or areas under a house provide good storage. 10. Check often for rot/mold/sprouts.

## LATE SEASON CUTTINGS

This beautifully warm November has produced many viable green sprigs on our dahlia bushes even so late in the season. These make wonderful late season cuttings. When there are at least sets of leaves, I prize the sprout off the stalk with my fingers; remove the first and



sometimes the second set of leaves; plant in rich compost with 1/3 perlite in a 1x1x3" wee pot; put under 18 hour lights in my unheated greenhouse; spritz daily. Tara was able to jimmy a nice specimen off Alberta Sunset. She has it under lights and is crossing her fingers for roots to begin growing any time now. Tinnee describes step-by-step how to build a light frame from a bookshelf and shop lights on the SFdahlias.org website. Look up "Building an Indoor Greenhouse."

## DAHLIA NOTEBOOK

This year I am starting my dahlia notebook in January. I'll write notes of what I've ordered, when I started my cuttings, when I am able to transfer my first cutting from a 1x1x3" to a 4x4." I'll note when the first dahlia of spring sprouted; when my first milk carton went up in the loft and when the first lofted milk carton actually sprouted; when I field dressed the first dahlia of spring? It's one of my New Year's resolutions, but I had to set up the book NOW.



Another New Year's resolution is to try a few rows with Hortanova instead of traditional dahlia bondage.

Dahlia digging and dividing is more fun with company. Ask friends and dahlia pals if you can help them or if they will come over to help you. If anyone has a particularly valuable or rather gnarly tuber mass, bring it to my Maus Haus and I'll help you divide it. Labeling several flats of processed tubers goes swimmingly with a

**couple friends and a bottle of wine.**

**Here's a special shout out to the Cactus and Succulent Society who lent us not only their snazzy tech gear but also their tech savvy to go with it. Dirt people cooperate so well.**

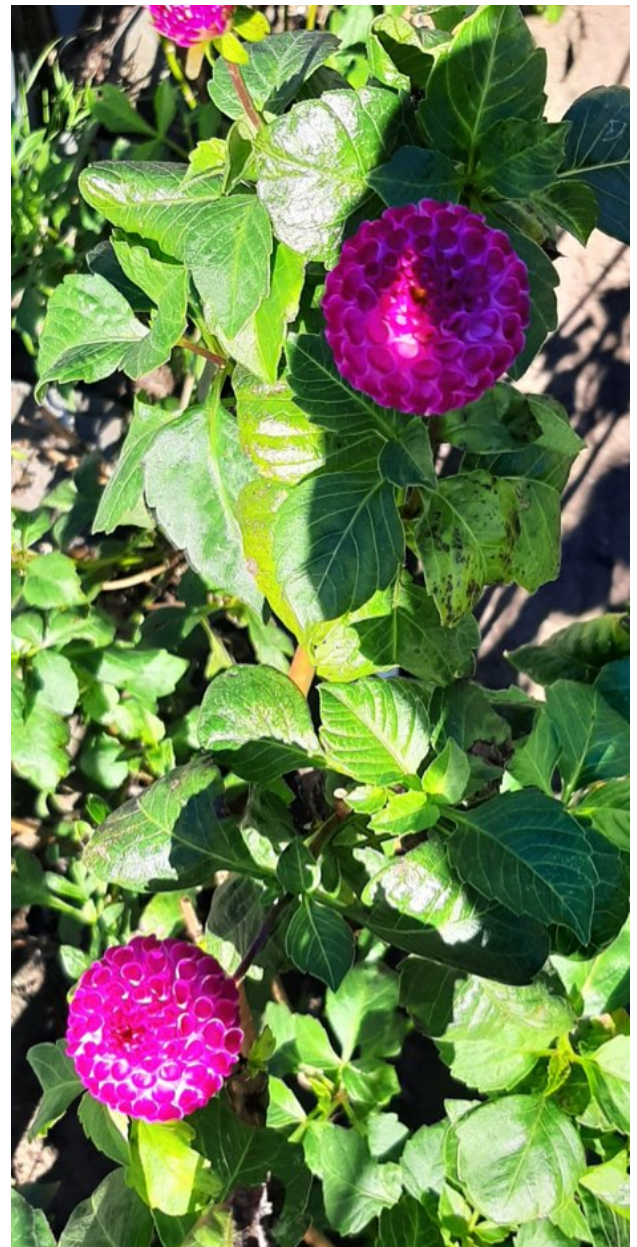




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Done







**Yours in dirt,  
Deborah**

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