



Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



NEXT MEETING: 9 April at 7:30 at 9th and Lincoln. Program: preparation for our Tuber and Plant Sale, planting tips, Secret Sauce recipes, checking for eyes, germination techniques, how to care for cuttings as opposed to tubers. Discussion of the 2024 Show Schedule and the various places you can enter different varieties of dahlias. Maybe some members will bring cuttings/tubers for sale? Some people like to offer their more sought after varieties to DSC members, in the hopes that tubers and cuttings of the same will be brought back to our society next year. Who will bring goodies to share with hungry gardeners?

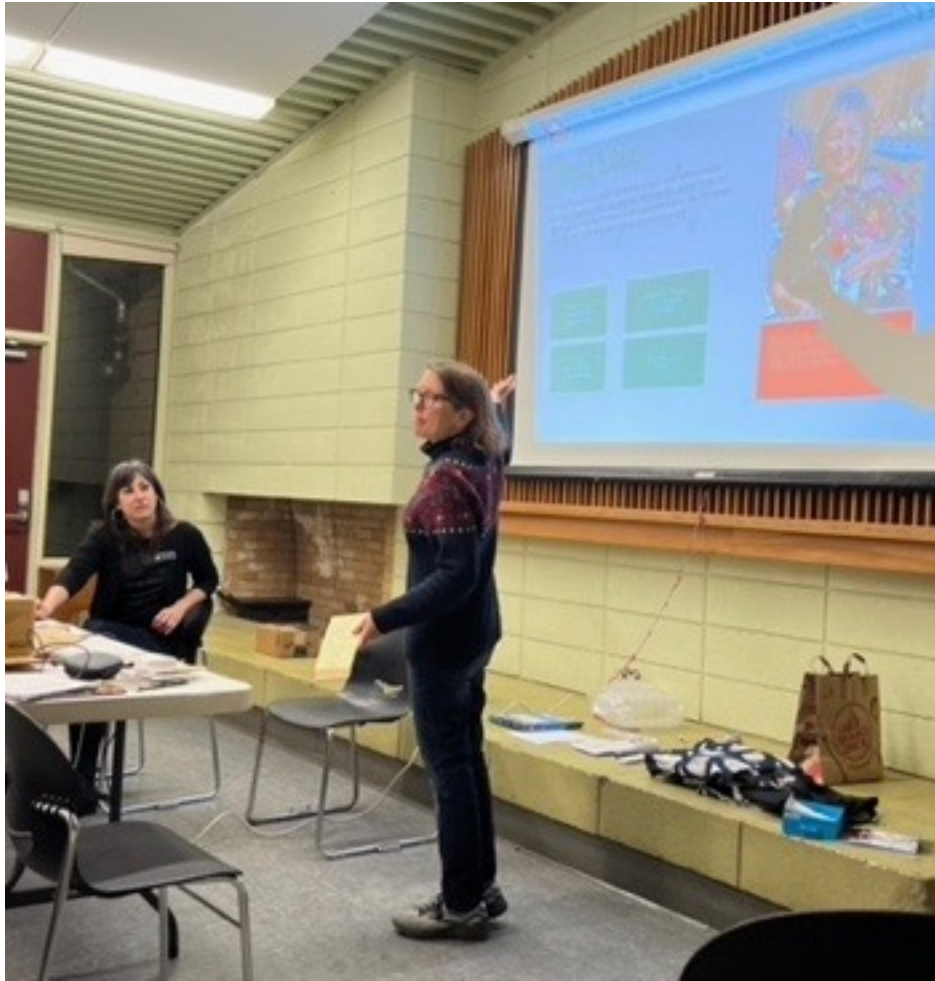
DSC MEETING

Not only did Sarah preside over our March meeting (with Minnie operating the Tech) but she also wrote up what transpired.

Our March meeting sported about 50 people (in person and on Zoom). One can



feel the excitement that the spring brings to us dahlia growers. We rejoiced in the success of the recent Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference, which our society organized.



Among the A-list speakers, were Tim Wong (Sisterhood Gardens), Dr. Virginia Walbot (Stanford Dahlia Project), and Abby Southard (Darling Dahlias).

We talked about the importance of growing for a purpose. Competition, bouquets,



color, variety, education. We reviewed the lists of 2023 competition winners: [Courts of Honor](#); [2023 Winners by Size or Type](#); [Top 20](#); [2023 Hall of Fame](#).

As Deborah says, “If you’re not growing dahlias on this list, you’re missing out!”

We shared a few short videos produced by Kristine Albrecht on finding tuber eyes, planting a tuber in a pot, and pinching to promote lateral growth. You can find these [videos](#) on the Monterey Dahlia Society’s

[website](#)

or on

YouTube

under Kristine Albrecht.

We had our own mini tuber sale that evening. Many thanks to our members for bringing in tubers.

GRATITUDE FOR GOODIE SUPPLIERS!

Lemons must be producing this month, because Anita brought Lemon Bars and

Susan baked a Lemon sheet cake. Pat found exotic Aussie BiFes?



John and Annette kept us healthy with tangerines while Maggie donated Skinny Popcorn. Thanks to Jenna and Peg for the Girl Scout Cookies and to Jean for the yummy oatmeal raisin cookies. Cara brought cool Buddha Hands and more scrumptious kumquats. Community is about taking care of each other.

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

Wow! DSC blew PSW through the roof! We were hoping for at least 60 people would sign up; we had to close registration after our attendance passed into the 90's! Zowie. A great problem to have. So many people worked to make PSW 2024 so outstanding.

Firstly, our fearless leader, Erik, gathered together many teams and like a ring master with a long whip, his constant contact assured continued progress. Peggy headed our venue team, ultimately scoring the Senior Center in San Leandro—free parking, great av/tech system, and excellent kitchen facilities. Sarah wrestled with catering,





aprons, program, and website updates. Jenna leaped into the concepts of swag, raffle, silent auction and created a photo op stop. Kristi handled all the tricky electronics, miscellaneous PowerPoint presentations, call-ins from Bloomerati around the country, and all things TECH. Lucy

solicited commercial dahlia growers and products; and re-solicited! Clack's Dahlia Patch, Dan's Dahlias, Lobaugh's Dahlias, Storehouse Dahlias, and a very generous Swan Island Dahlias all sent wonderful gift certificates.

Please support them with hefty orders if you can.





At 7 am on Saturday morning Debbie set up her registration table with



aprons filled with swag, badges, and beautiful 4-

page programs. Donning their green aprons, Tara, Peggy and Shelly immediately began selling hundreds of raffle tickets! Steve set up his T-shirt boutique.

****SWAG****

What an outpouring of generosity from other conference supporters! Curtis donated a handmade redwood rocking horse and gorgeous cradle. Patricia donated very





expensive and alluring wines! Deborah and Julie brought in little cuttings. Iris augmented the raffle with tubers of her originations as well as bringing both tubers and dahlia seed packets from Kristine



Albrecht. Becky brought tubers. Heather's healthy HUGE cuttings were nabbed as first picks. Steve, Lucy, Sonia and Jenna



contributed to a whole clothes rack of prizes. The silent auction tempted in so many cool ways. A hand printed silk floral slip dress sang its siren song to Tinnee. Lunch with Patricia Hunter! A sumptuous gift basket from Tenaya. How many people bid on the backstage tour of San Francisco Symphony Hall by Steve Dibner? So many that Steve acceded to giving TWO tours! At every break, Sarah and Jenna





called names of the LUCKY ONES. Loot was accumulated.

Lou pleaded, “We need judges, judges, JUDGES!” So please sign up for the South Coast Judging School this July 27 and/or help clerk at our local shows.

DR. VIRGINIA WALBOT

A Stanford professor, Dr. Walbot taught us about

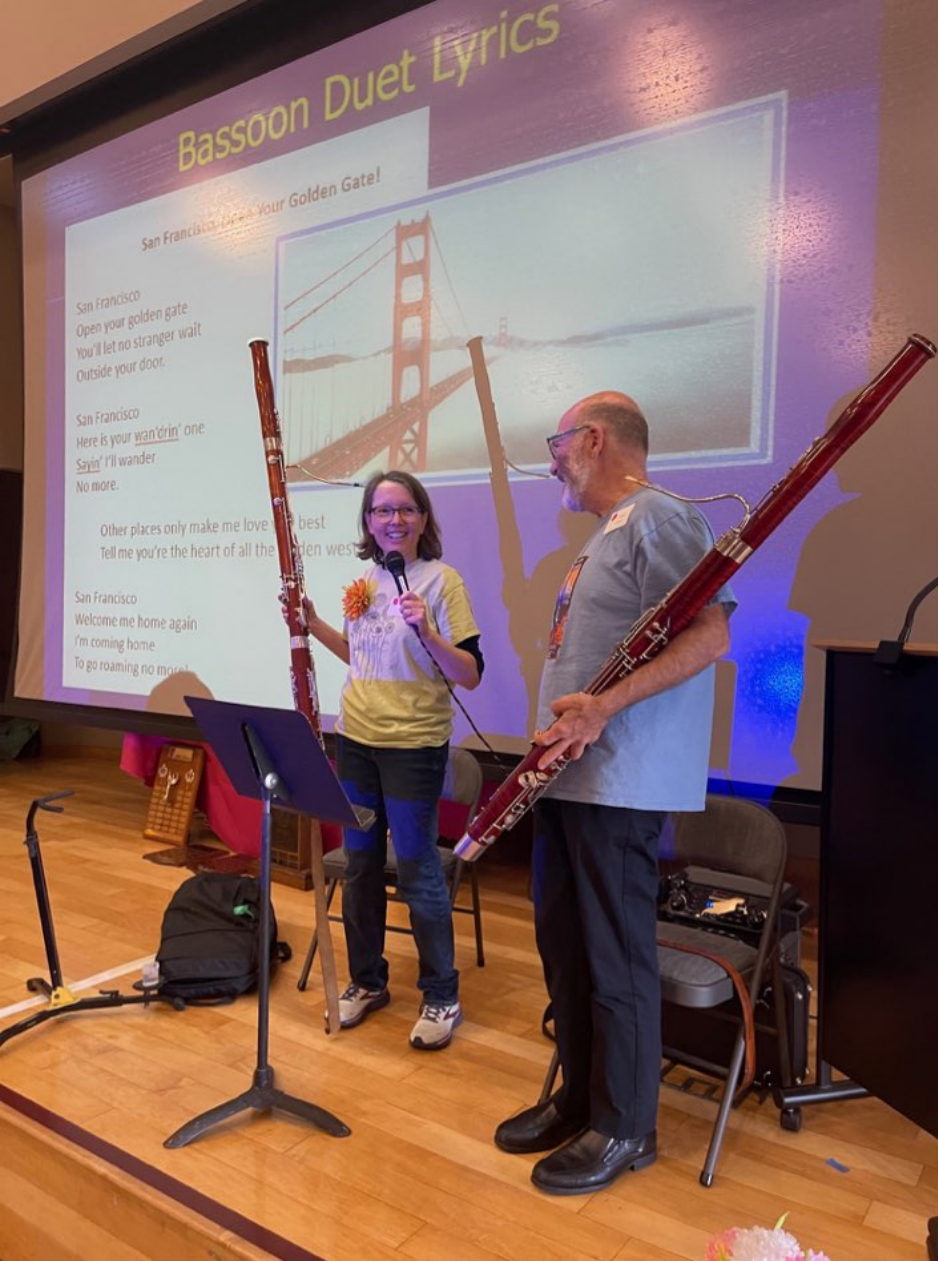


synthesizing anthocyanin which determines what colors our dahlias become. One gene determines each of 10 steps, each step being a new mutation or stall in the pigment pathway. It gets even even trickier than this. Pigment is made in the anthoplast; colorlessness is the cytoplasm; and color is made in the acidic vacuole. Wow. And there are on/off regulators. And many tints depend on sun/timing/exposure for darkening or lightening. AND there dozens of alleles which code for color on different places on a single petal. Essentially, yellow is the most dominant dahlia shade. Five steps of breakdown yield white. Down the line: slight pink-beige; then orange, red and finally at the end of many mutations and stalls reigns purple. Dr. Walbot grows 1-2000 dahlias in a greenhouse and many in the field. She is fighting a war with gophers like many of us. Grrrr. She and Kristine Albrecht started the Dahlia Genome Project. In particular this year, Dr. Walbot is looking for anemone, novelty, and other “odd” dahlias to study. If you have some to donate, contact Erik Gaensler.

Suzanne Bontempo

Suzanne stressed Integrative Pest Management: use the least amount of intervention as needed for the severity of





the problem. Mildew is spread by spores in the air. They thrive on high humidity, cloudy days and a fluctuation between day and night temperatures. Suzanne stressed that the farther apart and the cleaner the undergrowth, the better to keep mildew under control.

Musical Interlude

Sarah rearranged SAN FRANCISCO, OPEN YOUR GOLDEN GATE! for 2 bassoons. She and

Steve serenaded us and the Kristi flashed the lyrics on the big screen and we all sang along with them. What a way to work up an appetite for deli sandwiches and pastries.

Abby's Debut

At 9—almost 10—Abby shared slides of her 3 years of growing dahlias, her website with growing tips,

<https://sites.google.com/view/>





darlingdahlias/home and her two-time Best Junior Bloom successes.

Tim and Sisterhood Gardens

Heading up a roster of gardening in public places, Tim took us through 3



years of growing dahlias near Brotherhood Way in San Francisco. He shared that allowing the public to pick willy nilly resulted in “over harvesting” or reducing his poor plants to nubbins. Remedial action has been taken.

Curtis Kills

What a raconteur! Curtis vividly described the trials of growing at Lakeside Gardens in Oakland. However, he balanced these challenges with the satisfaction of sharing his knowledge about dahlias with so many curious people.

Growing on Other People's Grounds

Kristi Whitfield began growing dahlias in a Vietnamese Community Vegetable garden. When some “over harvesting” occurred, she moved to Lakeside Gardens. But when homeless people slept in her dahlias, she began worrying about her safety and began helping Roy Stier at Casa Peralta and a mortuary. Vagrant humans and vagrant cats are on-going concerns.

Gardening All Over the World

Born in Ecuador, Anita Castro Sparks' degrees in Plant Pathology and Plant Pest Management, had her working in Georgia and Gilroy. When she became a mom, she set up the Edna Maguire Elementary Garden with 17 raised beds, a fruit orchard, chicken coop and optimal sun exposure. Anita cultivates over 90 dahlias. The garden yields over 2000 lbs of produce annually supporting both students and local food-insecure community members.

Cultivating Dahlia Community

Deborah Dietz, infamous for her informal “dahlia university” in Golden Gate Park's famous Dahlia Dell, enthused about all the people she's encountered over her almost 40 years of dahlia endeavors. Bring her goodies and she will tell dahlia tales exhaustively.

How to Buy Dahlias On-line

Julie Eufemi walked us through this strange new tech world. Now you know whom to ask about this labyrinthine process.

PSW Cream of the Crop

Louise Henriksen walked us through 5 pages of data sliced and diced from the 2023 dahlia season. These are available at dahliadell.org. These are the winning dahlias in



California. Obviously, these are the dahlias successful show growers want in their plots.

MEDALS

Lou distributed PSW medals to the winners from the 2023 DSC show. Among the thrilled winners

were Julie, Deborah, the Ko couple and Heather hefting a heavy PSW Conference medal each. Kristi





earned two medals while our Obi Wan Kenobi, Lou triumphed with FOUR of these heavy tokens of glory.

So many people contributed to such a successful and wonderful day. Surely some names and some

actions failed to be remarked upon (for which Deborah apologizes); it took all our exceptional community to bring this amazing Pacific Southwest Conference off. Thank you!

DUES DUE!

It's time to renew your annual ADS (American Dahlia Society) and/or DSC (Dahlia Society of California) membership. Our membership year is from May 1, 2024 through April 30, 2025 The dues are as follows:

Dahlia Society of California only:

- Individual Membership.....\$10.00
- Family Membership.....\$15.00

American Dahlia Society AND Dahlia Society of California

- Individual Membership.....\$40.00
- Family Membership.....\$50.00

To learn about each of the above categories and to join please visit dahliadell.org and click on Join. You may also print out the membership form and mail it with your check to Debbie Frank, 226 28th Ave, SF CA 94121.

TUBER SALE RULES

Please arrive by 7 am with 1-2 Sharpies and an ADS Classification Book. Be prepared to do anything to help! Many members like to wear an apron and plastic surgery type gloves. A magnifying lens would be helpful to spot tiny tuber eyes. Do bring a dish to share for potluck lunch. Remember, any tuber or plant brought into the auditorium is FOR SALE; no trades inside the auditorium. All arrangements must be transacted outside in the parking lot. We will need markers, sorters, signs setter-outers, counters, adders, shopping advisors, planting experts, and table clearers. We hope everyone will be in their best Dahlia Society of California Ambassadorial mode; welcome questions, encourage people to join DSC, recommend that the public come by the Dahlia Dell often to watch progress, tell them about our two websites: sfdahlias.org and dahliadell.org If we get everything squared away, those who have been helping since 7 am will be allowed to shop before the public comes in. One cannot show up at 8:30 and expect this privilege. Nor should you leave once you've scored your new dahlias without helping with the public sale for at least an hour.

BEST PARK IN USA?

USA today is doing a poll for the 10 best reader's choice travel wards. Golden Gate Park was selected as a nominee for the Best City Park. The contest runs through Monday, April 8th at 9:00am. And people can vote once a day everyday! To vote, [click here](#) and press the blue "vote" button

Golden Gate Park is currently in the lead, but we were neck to neck with parks in Honolulu and St. Louis yesterday.



JULIE'S CUTTINGS

Julie tells us about taking cuttings for the first time:

I had 2 dahlia plants that were sprouting stems off of the main stock in late January.



Bloomquist Jean and Shiloh Noelle. I gently pulled down on the sprigs and planted them in a seedling tray with a mix of potting soil and seed starting soil and placed them under grow lights. There were 5 Shiloh Noelle's and 7 Bloomquist Jean. I removed many of the large leaves because they were flopping down on the soil. After 2 weeks I moved them into larger containers and placed them in front of a warm, sunny window.



So far only one of the 12 didn't make it. I donated 4 for the conference raffle. I gave 3 to dahlia friends at the conference, and kept 4 to trade or plant. I will



donate whatever is left for the SF dahlia sale. Well done, Julie!!

DSC CUTTING CREW

Tim documented the amazing crop of beauties that Lou, Tinnee, Gerry and Pat are growing for us. First they lay out all the tubers in styrofoam flats, partially covered with soil.



As they sprout, Lou slices the green shoots off. Tinnee pots the sprigs up in 4x4"s. Pat puts labels, which she has painstakingly printed, color-coded and alphabetized, in each container. They sit on a misting table for a couple weeks to develop roots. Ultimately they are set outside to harden off before our Tuber Sale April 27th. Thank you for alllll your efforts!

NEW DSC FLOWERS OF THE YEAR

The cutting crew reports that the two varieties they've made the most cutting of are Kenora Jubilee A SC W and Verrone's Morning



Star, orquette, which grows well in a pot. You will be able to purchase these at our Tuber Sale April 27. Please do! The idea behind Flowers of the Year is that many many people grow clones of the same variety; the judges decide who found the best light, the most supportive fertilizer, propitious staking, and splendid show staging. Try it!

MONTEREY DAHLIA AUCTION
MBDS will hold our tuber auction at our next in-person meeting on Thursday, April 4th, at the Live Oak Grange in Santa Cruz. 1900 17th

St. Santa Cruz, CA 95062. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for dahlia growing Q&A or socializing, and the meeting/ auction starts at 7 p.m. We'll wait until after the auction to work through any society business so that out-of-town folks can get home faster. 😊

We did this last year, and it was a lot of fun. We figured we'd invite our friends from other societies to join us.

How our auction works:

Before coming: Select at least one dahlia tuber or plant to donate, preferably one that is either hard to find, new, or might be someone else's 'unicorn'. Send the variety's name to heymbds@gmail.com so we can find pics of it to show the group at auction time.

Once you arrive: You'll turn in your tuber(s) (we can add any late additions to our slide deck). You'll be provided with a paddle and number.

Bidding: We'll post a pic of the flower up for auction and call out its name. Bidding starts at the price of items at our tuber sale, \$8 for tubers and \$13 for plants. Interested bidders raise their paddle and keep it up until either the price gets too high for their liking, and they bow out, lowering their paddle, or they are the last bidder with their paddle raised. In instances where there is more than one tuber of a variety, let's say there are 4, we go until the last 4 paddles are in the air, and they all pay that same price. In instances where there are tubers and plants of the same variety, they are separated into 2 separate bidding sessions, as they have different opening bids and are different to care for.

Checking out: Throughout the auction, the winner of each item is recorded along with the price they won it at. We'll accept Cash, Venmo, and Checks. After checkout, you'll be handed the bag with all your winnings.



HOME ON THE HILLSIDE



Whew! Finally finished! The 5 Hillside's growers had a summit meeting to determine who will grow where (see plot pic). Many have begun sinking gopher baskets and filling them with their secret sauces.

Great hydro-engineering minds are working on the Drip System Project. Soon planting will begin! Wow. So many thanks to our benefactor— who prefers to be anonymous—we soooooo appreciate your amazing support! We hope this lasts at least as



long as the last 70-year construction.



DAHLIA DELLIANS

Deborah finally got to the Dell after a month of Covid crud; she felt so wonderful being back in the garden. Steve, Lucy, Brigid and Jenn joined her to begin pulling implacable weeds. Pulling the roots completely out is essential! Deborah is field dressing some of her clumps, pulling out others and slowly wheeling them back to her car via little wagon so she can divide them at her Maus Haus.

ABSOLUTELY APRIL!!!

Yes! it's time to plant! Yay! But first, do you have everything structural you need in place? Watering system? Stakes? Gopher

cages or basins? Make sure your gopher cages rise at least 2-3” above the surface of the soil in case you have intrepid Phd rodents who risk the overland route to ruin your beloved posies. Grrrr. All chicken manure or “hottish” amendments should be in place for at least 2 weeks before planting.

Secret Sauce

Everyone has their favorite initial amendments. I use a heaping tablespoon of Dr. Earth Flower Girl fertilizer. It has NPK as well as micro-minerals, microrrhizie and micro-biota to promote a healthy understory. I also add a teaspoon of Calcium Nitrate (aka Dahlia Viagra). Other people add bone meal and seaweed-derived powder.

Stakes

All stakes should be pounded in BEFORE you plant!! If you plant first and then jab in a stake, you run the risk of mashing any roots that have already developed. Lou likes sturdy redwood stakes; I like the painted iron rebar stakes. Remember, place short dahlias closest to the sun source and tallest in the back.



The Differences Between Planting Tubers or Cuttings

First let’s consider the two types of tubers you might be planting: inert tubers and tubers with 3-5 sets of leaves already. I plant all my ungerminated tubers in milk cartons in rich potting soil and pop them up in my loft. NO WATER until green emerges. Here are Ale’s milk cartons awaiting germination. Here are Ale’s first milk cartons. Tubers do NOT have any roots, so they cannot absorb water; in lieu of roots, they’ll rot in the presence of damp/wet soil. Tubers in milk cartons and gallon pots with 3-5 pairs of leaves, have

many roots already. They need to be planted below the second notch or leaf pair; this is where this fall's tubers will develop. The tubers with ample leaves, should be watered immediately upon planting. Cuttings by contrast, have NO tubers, just tiny, frail roots. One of the main reasons people complain that they don't get good tubers from cuttings the first season is that they don't plant them deeply enough. Cuttings should be planted up to their second pair of leaves—this is where this fall's tubers will develop. Cuttings have roots, so they can absorb moisture; but their roots are hair-fine—they only take in small amounts of water at a time. Ideally, cuttings should be watered a wee bit in the morning and again a wee bit in the evening. They thrive with occasional spritzing. If you plant a mixed lot of cuttings, inert tubers and potted tubers, you need to use adjustable emitters on your drip system. You should customize the amount of water for each plant until they are all developing well.

What to Buy at our Sale?

Check the PSW Conference Fabulous Fifty and the Winners categories. These are the varieties that do well (they WIN!) in

California. Use your on-line or ADS Classification Book: stack the odds for success in your favor! (These can be found at dahlia.dell.org)



WEED WEED WEED!

Everything is raring to grow right now, including weeds. The more you can eradicate now, the fewer you will have to contend with later. Just saying.....











**Yours in dirt,
Deborah**

**Photo Credits: Dietz, Gaensler, Kaiser, Lanese, Marks, Servin,
Smith, Wong**

Proofreader Extrodinaire: Steve

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