



Dahlia Society of California Newsletter



NEXT MEETING: October 2025

October 14, 7:30 at 9th and Lincoln. Parking in the lot at 10th and Lincoln. Program: Anita, Alex and Allison will show us pictures and tell stories from the ADS National Dahlia Show in Chicago. Jenna will share pinning the mayor at Flower Piano and talking



about the Anonymous Bouquet project. We'll talk about October dahlia culture. Who will bring goodies for hungry gardeners?

SEEDLINGS: PROFLIGACY AND RESTRAINT

Tim illustrated his talk with a glorious bouquet of his first and second year seedlings to whet our appetites to try sowing a few seeds of our own next spring. He differentiated between wild pollination and hand pollination. Wild pollination relies on the natural pollinators in our gardens to carry little golden grains of genetics between waning blooms. For this reason Tim

recommends if you are trying to hybridize a specific type of dahlia such as a waterlily form, you might grow all your water lilies in one area slightly apart

from all the others. If you are hoping for fully double varieties, you might cut down all your disc centered varieties and wait two weeks to begin collecting seed since open centers are more dominant than fully double. Hand pollinating involves little brushes to collect and distribute grains of yellow magic. After you hand cross your selected blooms, you can put a mesh bag





over the top to prevent inadvertent free pollinators from scrambling their genes into your favored mix. Hybridizers like Kristine Albrecht keep elaborate records of their crosses; their breeding records resemble famous racing horse stud books! Thank you, Tim, for bringing in seedheads and beautiful seedling blooms.

JENNA PROJECTS

Jenna led a discussion about where we (super)succeeded at our annual show and where we need to pay more attention. We all agreed that the arrangements were the BEST ever been. So Jenna

encouraged more people to enter arrangements next year. Jenna invited members to Flower Piano, the annual event where 32 pianos sprout up around the Arboretum for the month of September. Jenna showed off our new logo, proving that small committees can indeed produce superior collective product! Lastly, Jenna enticed us with the catalog from Rifle Paper Company Store. They feature dahlia bedspreads, towels and even shower curtains. Very fun!



100th ANNIVERSARY PHOTO PROJECT

Cristina announced her photo project to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our dahlia being dubbed the official flower of San Francisco. Coming from an architectural and design background, Cristina uses her experience both in the garden and in the studio to produce fabulous photos to illustrate the 8 Dell donors and their



special blooms. She will highlight each grower, some favorite varieties and some of their stories. For example, Erik, first got DSC involved back in 1992. Lou hybridizes. Sarah grows varieties that remind her of her family, Blomquist Paul Jr. after her husband, and Twisted Sister.... Deborah mentors volunteers. Tim takes his beauties to the Science Academy on lunch breaks. So many good stories and lovely pix. The early pix have been gorgeous. We appreciate that she waters all the free-standing pots each time

she comes. How do you think we should commemorate this momentous 100 milestone next year?

NOVICE ONLY MINI SHOW

Congratulations to our novices! This was the first competition for three of our exhibitors who started by learning how to get the ADS number for their entries. Thanks to Deborah and Lucy who judged.

Deborah explained that since form and color accounted for

the largest number of points, form and color problems usually differentiated winners from also rans. Moreover, due to the muggy warm evening, we had an uncommon number of popped centers

which disqualify blooms no matter how magnificent. Alas. When discussing Heather's dark purple Shadow Cat, Deborah mentioned how many growers erect golf umbrellas a couple weeks before a competition to keep morning dewdrops and particulate matter from slightly marring the really dark blooms or immaculate white specimens. Peggy suggested cutting little tears in the billowing fabric to prevent wind accidents. Anita's Sandia Summertime



nabbed Best Disc; Tim's Hollyhill Daydream ascended to Best Small; and Anita's Blomquist Jean won both Best Large and Best in Show. They reaped beautiful ribbons and plenty of ca\$h donated by Erik who watched the whole event on zoom from Boston. Congratulations!! Check out the cool carrying case Chad made for Tim.



TECH TEAM

We were pretty panicky in the absence of both Erik and Sarah missing our September meeting. We held several War Meetings in person, on line, and Zoom. Thanks to the expertise of Sarah and Mini we figured out how to channel zoomers. Mini perfected her



handheld cell phone technique to film individual blooms from our competition. Jenn and Mini fielded Zoomer questions. Jenn brought extra exhibitor cards; Jenna brought extra vases. It truly takes a village and we've got such a splendid one!

FOOD FOR FRIENDS

Thank you to Brigid for fresh pumpkin bread and to Anita for amazing orange/cranberry/pistachio cake. Ken and Kathy and Francis and John both contributed cookies. Where did Steve find Dreds— Reese's oreo-like cookies??? Thank you, too, for the cashews.

Maggie had been to See's again and returned with wonderful chocolate crisps. MMM! How unusual and yummy was Jenna's Ube party mix. Thank you all who sustained our group's bellies and spirits.

2026 ALREADY?

A Year in Dahlias – 2026, a beautiful dahlia 11 x 17 inch wall calendar by Tina McNabb and Alan Fisher features 19 beautiful high



gloss images of dahlias on strong, high gloss paper. The 2026 calendar is the finest that either has yet produced. To preview the calendars, use



this link:

https://portal.printingcenterusa.com/flipbook_share.php?code=962862 Prices start at \$14 but there are discounts for buying more. Maybe someone could organize a group buy???

FLOWER PIANO

On Friday, September 12th, the Dahlia Society donated over 20 bouquets and 55 corsages for the 10th Anniversary of Flower Piano in the SF Botanical Gardens. Jenna and Sarah





wore their new vintage dahlia sweatshirts with pride! Our colorful dahlias were a big hit, adding the “flower” to the event. Even the mayor walked away with a corsage! On opening night, Jenna and Sarah encouraged visitors to participate in the upcoming Walk n Talks at the Dell. Flower Piano is a long standing tradition of lovely instruments tucked about the massive garden where some people perform on schedule and some performers just show up and play. One 7 year

old arrived in his snazzy black suit, shiny black shoes, carrying his sheet music. So many really pleasant surprises. Sometimes impromptu duets made the air sparkle!

WALK N TALK x3

Once again Jenna set up our membership table and hung Erik’s great historical triptych. Deborah led the first tour, telling dahlia stories as she strolled a crowd around the tear drop and hillside. Steve and Mini accepted her verbal baton seamlessly and fielded questions for another half hour. Joe and Jenn T helped people sign up on-line or fill out forms for DSC





membership. Ding Ding Ding! All morning and afternoon website alarms informed out-of-town Sarah that people were flocking to join our dahlia society. With a quick gulp of coffee, Deborah embarked in a second round of fun facts. Afterwards, one visitor who attended both tours, asked, “Why don’t you do this more often? It’s fascinating!” Recent volunteer, Antoinette, stepped up to the plate and practiced two Walk n Talks the last weekend in

September. So, Good news: we'll have one more round of Walk n Talks on Saturday, October 4 at 11:30 and 12:30. Tell your friends.

HOT TALK IN HIGH PLACES

Erik delivered another of his jocular disquisitions about dahlias at the prestigious California Club where previously Bill Clinton and Nancy Pelosi have held forth. With Jenn T and Sarah's help he dazzled his audience with loads of gorgeous dahlias which the members were able to take home.



Many asked what they could do to help DSC out. Erik suggested many possibilities!

ZOUNDS! CORSO ZUNDERT!

In the Netherlands every fall, various hamlets vie for best Float made out of flowers. Check out the url Sonia sent: <https://corsozundert.nl/en/our-corso/results-2025/>

SHADE HOUSES DEFY LODI HEAT

Unlike San Francisco, Lodi has plenty of sun—perhaps too much glaring sun.





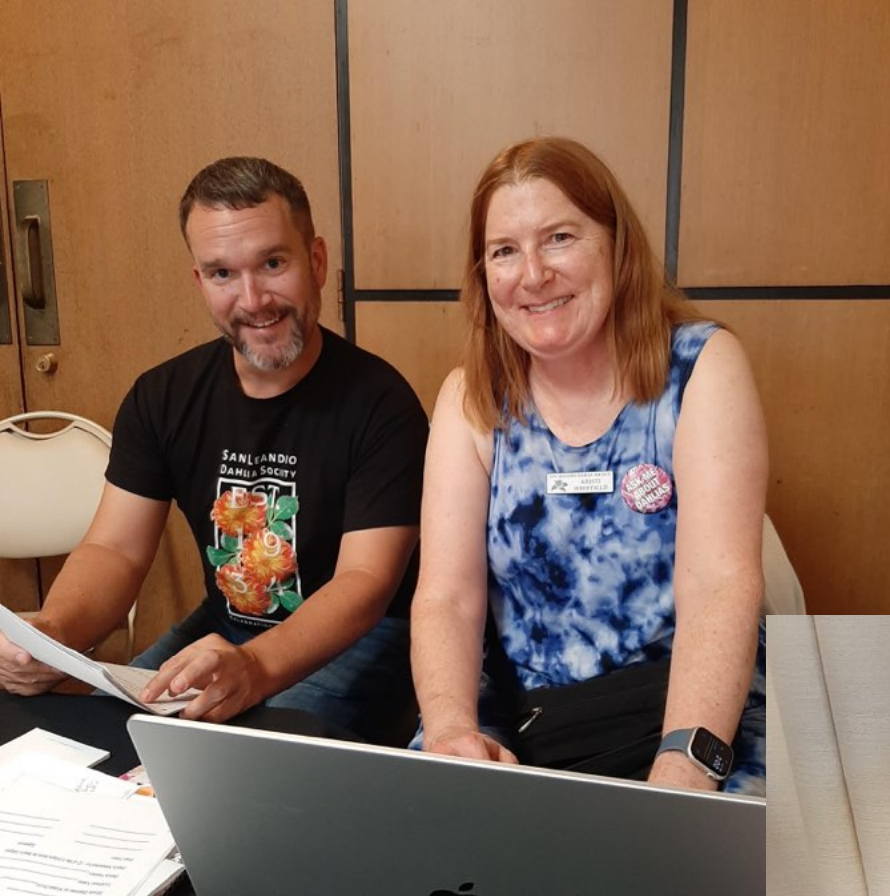
So long-time commercial farmers, Ken and Kathy, built shade houses to spare their dahlias from the brunt of brutal blaze. During this glorious Indian summer, they revel in the “tons” of blooms produced. Note in the photos how luscious their leaves despite several days in a row of TRIPPLE digit temperatures.

SAN LEANDRO SHOW

Despite a last minute venue change, San Leandro hosted a beautiful show at Lake Merritt in

Oakland. Many people strolled through the show looking like bridesmaids having purchased great dahlia bouquets at their flower concession. Congratulations to Chris Dix for not only producing the Best Small, Olivia Maureen, but also Best in





Show C
Vassio Meggos. Francis
and Jon's Raeann's Antares
collected Best Disc
Centered. Our Lou
amalgamated Amateur
Sweeps; the Sodermans
nailed Open Sweepstakes;
and Kristi W swept Novice.

Wow! Kristi again managed
successful electronic clerking
and tallying. Click here for the
show results. [https://](https://tinyurl.com/slds2025show)
tinyurl.com/slds2025show



Check out Quamrun's use of
pomegranates in her purple
"fruit" arrangement. Lou's
Hollyhill Electra stopped
people in their tracks. So
HUGE and stunning. Alex
and Allison appreciated how
the black tablecloths really
highlighted the beauty.



HILLSIDE AND TEAR DROP

The most obvious difference in Dell kingdoms is that Lou and Tim are letting their segments “go to seed.” In order to get seeds, they

must allow the flower to loose all its petals, an ugly process when we’re expecting well manicured plots. Each seed will be a unique genetic entity. Because most of these seeds will NOT be competition worthy, we call them dahlia lottery tickets. But some win! They unfurl into Eden Alice and Eden Sunday Steve. So if you see some clumps looking quite frowsy, know that they might be germinating the Next Big Thing! Meanwhile, Sue’s area, having survived some truly heinous vandalism, continues to get brighter and more floriferous. Sarah tends not just her second row but also helps out her fellow Hillsiders. So generous. She recently showed Deborah





how to check for clogged emitters. Tinnee and Gerry have added beautiful labels to their stunning dahlias, elucidating fabulous NEW additions to the park. Kevin Woodson has been painting almost every day. The public loves to watch dahlias bloom on his paper. Deborah's young interns have gone back to school but Antoinette, Carol, Leila and Jennifer have volunteered for Saturdays. As always, they started on tiny Elvira to learn to spot the deadheads

and disbuds before they went on to bigger blooms. Jennifer ministrated to the Petting Zoo, the area along the fence, removing crummy leaves. Carol and Antoinette pursued weeds diligently and transplanted a few 4x4's into gallon pots. Deborah has replaced a few struggling dahlias with robust ladies in waiting, so there may be more blooms through November. After trying for 6 years with 5 different plants,





finally her Dancing Queen thrives gorgeously!

OCTOBER ADJUSTMENTS Deadhead, Disbud, Cut Down

As our light hours wane, our dahlias slow down—but they don't stop yet!! October can be an absolutely beautiful month in your garden. October's watchword is "aggressive."

Aggressively cut to new growth. Look for your big, healthy spurts of new growth and cut down to them. Check your crotches where two or three flower stalks have emerged in the past. Cut **BELOW** any such crotches; there is no way for your dahlia to produce new sprouts here, so you have to cut below it. If you leave such dead end



junctions, that branch



turn brown. When you see such brown branches, cut down to 3-5 joints above soil level. Use dwindling sun wisely. Sometimes double disbudding at this time of year yields bolder, bigger blooms; fewer flowers but better dahlias.

Cocktail du Jour

What does your garden need this time of year? NOT fertilizer. The old wives warn against fertilizer after October 1st, positing that fertilizer will hinder making tubers with tough skins.

Probably NOT bug deterrents. I've seen a few caterpillars and

aphids but nothing on the catastrophic Code Red level. If you see zigzagged ruffled edges on a bloom, look more closely for the caterpillar that's munching away and pluck it out. If you see a bud encrusted with tiny black or green aphids, the simplest solution is to cut off the whole bud—down to new growth! So I probably would not add BT, the active ingredient in Captain Jack's Dead Bug. Mildew? Grrrr! This time of year, mildew is horrible. So I've been adding a little commercial fungicide to my mix of dishwashing soap, Stylet Oil, milk and baking soda. Sue reminded me that although the recommended amount of Stylet Oil is 4 tablespoons per gallon, it's too much in our area. I'm using only 1 tablespoon per gallon. I also LOVE my electric sprayer because it has a super fine mist selection. Exactly what my leaves need this time of year. Try to spray at dusk, just before dark, to protect your beneficial bugs.



Ted Kennedy of Hollyhill Dahlias writes,
“ Powdery mildew has increased in recent years and it may be attributable to dahlia people acquiring rooted cuttings. The growers of the cuttings sometimes have problems with powdery mildew. The strains of the disease are new to us. Historically, the type of PM we have had is the type that appears in wooded areas in the early Fall and is spread by the wind to our dahlias. It is easily controlled by fungicide, especially those that are systemic. The new infections are much more difficult to control. There have been



reports that these systemic chemicals have not been very effective or that the grower must use two or three of the different chemicals to achieve control. There is new type of fungicide that seems to work well on this problem. Serenade®

ASO is a product that uses a strain of bacteria to control fungus infections. Dan Baulig reports that it did good job on his powdery mildew and that he was glad to pay all that money for enough of the product to treat a hundred acres (minimum purchase is 2.5 gallons, about \$150.00)."



Rogue, Label, Make Notes

While you still have decent blooms, check your labels! Last chance to key out your unnamed heroes. Last chance. If you have more than one bush of a specific variety, decide which is the superior plant. Is it because of slightly better genetics or because it's in a better spot in your garden or did you treat it differently? Swan

Island grows 100 clumps of each variety. Looking down the long long isle of fantastic blooms, one could note that there are a couple stunted plants and a couple overachievers. Swan Island tends to plant the overachievers each year. You should mark **BEST** on your **BEST** plant **NOW** whilst you still know which



one succeeded better. Did you end up with a tall plant in front of smaller ones blocking the light? Note that on your label so you can plant it in a more efficient place next year. Jessica, Labyrinth and Pennhill Watermelon tend to be bullies in my section of the Dell; they want almost twice the space of other dahlias. I note that so I can accommodate their ambitious growing styles better next year. Picasso and Western Spanish Dancer, by contrast, are short and fragile. I note that they need more light and space to take off early in the season. Good notes really help during spring planting frenzy.

When to Stop Watering?

As our dahlias slow down, they need less water—except when we get blazing Indian Summer sunshine. But dahlias communicate well. Are they turgid? Erect? Excellent. They are fine and do not need water. Are they a little limpish? Then they need a drink. So during October, take your dahlias off their automatic timers and watch them carefully.

Especially with nights full of heavy mist and mornings saturated with drizzle, your dahlias will need far less extra moisture. Moreover, now is the time your clump is building up its tuber trove; too much liquid will turn these little potatoes to mush. Too sad.



Share a couple anonymous little bouquets with your community.
You have no idea whom you might be touching.

Yours in dirt,
Deborah





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