

Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

Meets second Tuesday of the month at Rose City Park United Methodist Church, 5830 N.E. Alameda

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Next meeting Tuesday, March 8th, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

CALLING ALL TUBERS

Please bring the tubers you plan to donate to our annual fundraisers to the March meeting. Please be sure each tuber is clean, free of rot and has a viable eye. You do not need to write on each tuber, as long as it is clearly marked in some way. More than one tuber of a variety may be put in a bag with the name written on the outside of the bag. In preparation for our annual sales, two workshops will be held at Swan Island Dahlias. The first will be on Saturday, March 26th, and the second on Saturday, April 16th. The second one will be to prepare tubers for the Master Gardener's Sale. Starting time for both workshops is 9:00 AM. Please help out at one or both if you can. We need your tubers and assistance. We will be having a pot luck luncheon following the work parties. Please e-mail, phone or give your list of donated tubers to Shirley Bankston at the meeting. Shirley would most appreciate a picture of the varieties, if available. This way we will have labels and pictures available for the tuber-pack.

MONTHLY AUCTION

If you have tubers of newer varieties that are ready to be auctioned, bring them in and they will be auctioned off at this meeting. The Board feels that we may get a better price if we do some selling prior to our main event and some of those who take cuttings would like to get them sooner. This will be limited to newer varieties, or those that are very hard to find.

COOKIES FOR MARCH

Shirley Bankston, Shivaun Smith and George Ermini will be providing cookies for the March meeting.

PROGRAM FOR MARCH

We will have a discussion and demonstration on how to make cuttings and increase your stock. Also a discussion about the best way to start dahlia seed. All this without the use of a greenhouse.

DAHLIAS OF TODAY 2011

We hope to have the 2011 Issue of Dahlias of Today available at the March meeting. This publication of the Puget Sound Dahlia Association is a "must have" for all

serious dahlia growers. It contains reviews of new varieties in the US and UK along with numerous color photographs. You will want to read it cover to cover.

2011 DUES ARE DUE.

If you haven't already paid, dues are past due. Judges please remember that you are required to carry membership in both the American Dahlia society and the PNDC (Pacific Northwest Dahlia conference). PDS dues, ADS dues and PNDC dues should be combined and paid to the Treasurer as noted below. Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers dues are \$10 and also payable through our Treasurer.

PDS	ADS	PNDC
Adults: \$7.00	Individual: \$20.00	Individual \$10.00
Couples: \$10.00	Family: \$23.00	Dual: \$15.00
Juniors: \$1.00		
Mail to or pay at next meeting		
Larry Sawyer, 11015 S.W. Berkshire, Portland, OR 97225		

MARCH CHECKLIST

How are those tubers doing in storage? Regardless of your storage medium and method, it is advisable to see how things are storing. Sometimes rot or insects (springtails or fungus gnats) can spread from one tuber to the next. Remove the rotted portion of the tubers and treat the cuts with captan or sulfur. Many growers believe that a rotting tuber gives off ethylene gas which promotes premature sprouting in the other tubers in the same bag. While checking the tubers you may want to select some varieties for cuttings. I don't have the space to take all the cuttings I want at once. Therefore, some tubers are rotated back into storage and others come out to take still more cuttings.

While going through your stored tubers please take time to set aside tubers for our Auction and Sales. We need everyone's support to insure the success of our annual fundraisers. Including a list of varieties and respective quantities is helpful to the volunteers who will be doing the packaging at the workshops. Please forward this information (with pictures if available) to Shirley Bankston.

March is a good time to get a soil test and find out what your ground lacks or perhaps has too much of a given element. A&L Laboratories does soil analysis. Information available at their website: <http://www.al-labs-west.com/sections/anservices>

Our society also owns a *Keyway* electronic soil pH analysis instrument. This can be used to determine the amount of lime needed to promote optimum dahlia growing performance. Please see or contact Mike Riordan to sign up for use. riordanm@prodigy.net

SPRING MEETINGS

Mark your calendars!!! The Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers will hold their Spring Workshop at Faith Lutheran Church, 8208 – 18th Avenue NE, in Seattle on Saturday, March 19, 2011. The workshop begins at 9:00 AM. There is no charge for this function and most participants bring a brown bag lunch. Presentations on aspects of dahlia growing are provided throughout the day and the event is culminated with a slide show and auction of newer varieties.

The Pacific Northwest Dahlia Conference will hold its Spring Meeting on Saturday, April 23th, 2011 at the Georgetown Realty Offices at 1000 NE 122nd Avenue in Portland. We begin with a luncheon at noon followed by a short business meeting. This is followed by a tuber and plant auction. Many of the originators from the entire west coast (British Columbia through Southern Oregon) will be in attendance. Many will bring some of their new originations and imports to the auction. Everyone's interest in the newer varieties and the spirited bidding (encouraged by a professional auctioneer) is more than worth the price of the luncheon. You need not be a PNDC member to attend or participate in this function.

EARLY DAHLIA PLANTING

by Ted J. Kennedy

Every year I hear of someone who is planting their dahlias weeks before our planting dates. Here in the Portland, Oregon area, we generally plant tubers around Mother's Day or about the 10th of May. I always hear of people who have started planting many weeks before that date. Some of them benefit from the early planting and have early blooms. However, there are risks associated with early planting that in many years will affect your dahlias. One of the most obvious issues is the last date of a killing frost. Here at our location, we had a killing frost as late as April 22nd. In that year, the weather had been warm and sunny and the soil dry enough to till. We planted some seedling plants and despite our efforts of covering them with plastic, lost numerous plants to the frost. Of course, had we planted tubers at the same time, they would not have quite yet sprouted above the soil and would have not been damaged.

But even if we had planted tubers the soil would not have warmed up enough for dahlia tubers to quickly sprout. People point out that the dahlia tuber clumps that they left in the ground over the winter are sending up shoots long before our planting dates. These overwintered dahlias probably sent up the first shoots many weeks before one sees them poke above the soil line. But there are big differences between an over wintered dahlia clump and your lone tuber. The overwintered dahlia clump has probably 4 to 6 or even 10 tubers with eyes. Only one or two sprouts need to successfully grow to make a plant and if several are frozen or eaten by slugs and snails, there are very many sprouts to take their place. Our lone tuber may have only one eye and if it freezes or rots, or is eaten by a slug, it may never recover. So the best course of action is to plant our tuber in warm soil, so that it will jump out of the ground and thrive.

There are at least two ways to get your dahlias blooming earlier and planting them in the ground too early is not one of them. One of the best ways is to plant your tubers in black gallon nursery pots. No special soil is needed as your garden soil works fine. The pots can be placed in a warm environment such as a greenhouse but the easiest way is to just leave them outside in the full sun. The black pots absorb the sun's rays and are much warmer than the garden's cool soil. Another way is to take cuttings from dahlia tubers or pot tubers and grow them in successively bigger pots. By the time the dahlia is a foot tall or so in a gallon pot, it will really put on a growth spurt when planted in the garden. If you are a bit lazy, just leave the dahlia cutting in the small pot where you placed the cutting to root. Even a small pot dahlia will bloom two three weeks before tubers planted in the ground.

Additional benefits of planting at the proper time include:

Less weeding and easier weeding. If a tuber takes a long time to pop up from under the ground, you still have to weed. Weeding dahlias that have not yet sprouted is difficult.

Wet soil and rotting. It may be very nice weather in early spring and the soil may be ready to till. If you plant tubers early, cold wet weather may follow and the tubers may rot in the cold wet soil. And if they do sprout, slugs may well eat the sprouts before you can get out into the garden to control them.

TUBER SALE FLYER

Included in this mailing is a flyer for our sale and auction April 12th. If each of us could place (with permission) the flyer or copies thereof in our area stores, community bulletin boards, health clubs, garden centers, places of employment or any other place interested parties could take notice; this would help with the success of our sale.