

Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

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

Club Website: portlanddahlia.com

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Next meeting Tuesday, October 11th, 2011 @ 7:30 PM

COOKIES FOR OCTOBER

Cookie host for October meeting is Gary Murphy. With a jam-packed program, we hope to have lots of members present. Maybe we each could bring a few extra treats.

SEEDLING COMPETITION

Again this year we will have a competition for the best seedling. First through third year are ok, as long as they will not appear in the 2012 ADS Classification Book. We will have an award for the best show dahlia as well as the best and most unusual cut flower. So bring one or more entries to this debut competition.

PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER

We will also have a panel discussion of the ins and outs of digging, dividing and storing dahlias. So bring your ideas and questions to the meeting.

CLUMP AUCTION

At the meeting we will have undivided clumps of dahlias available. They will be sold using the "silent auction" method. Members are asked to bring a few clumps of surplus stock that can be donated to this event. Please make sure the clumps are well washed and marked with the variety name. We will have 3 x 5 note cards available for the bidding which can take place before the meeting or during the refreshment break. Last year members liked this program idea. We will repeat this program feature at the November meeting.

NATIONAL SHOW UPDATE

We are now officially on our way to hosting the ADS National Show in 2012. We had several members of your society take part in the 2011 National Show in Santa Clara, California. As reported in the September Bulletin, our National Committee staged an impressive and detailed invitation for 2012 to the attendees. Mark Oldenkamp made a similar invitation at the Portland and Eugene awards presentations at the conclusion of those respective shows this season.

FLOWER OF THE YEAR AND CHALLENGE FLOWER SELECTED

Your 2012 National Show Committee has selected Pooh as the Flower of the Year and Nick Sr. as the Challenge Flower for our 2012 National Show. Both flowers were originated by our commercial member, board member and Trial Garden sponsor, Swan Island Dahlias.



Photo courtesy of Cowlitz River Dahlias

OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

To dig or not to dig...? Soon the colors will begin to fade and forms will become more imprecise. The sunny brisk fall days of October will begin to wane and be inevitably followed by the wet, short, cold, overcast days of late November. An advantage to digging this month is the soil is not yet waterlogged and the soil comes away from the tubers more easily. Also consider there may be some spots in your garden which have poor drainage and these areas should be first dug. Moreover, some varieties are more susceptible to rot in waterlogged November soil. Notoriously hard to winter over varieties like Rhonda, Mi Wong or Hallmark should be lifted and stored first before soil borne molds begin to do their damage.

If you have planted multiple plants of the same variety, compare them carefully to determine which plants have produced the best flowers. Which plants appear more vigorous and have the best centers and overall form? This is your *superior* stock which you will want to replant or in some instances take cuttings from next year. I sometime code the tubers and the plastic tag with an "x" by the name to so indicate.

Many of us are still making crosses and attempting to save seed for next year's stars of tomorrow. It is ok to harvest the seed pods if they are firm and straw yellow in color. Some growers like to break open and dry the seeds from the ripe pods. Others prefer to leave the pods whole and allow them to dry naturally in a dry location. I find it easy to cut the pods with foot long stems and then dry my pod bouquets grouped in ADS plastic exhibition vases. Sometimes I find I'll leave a seed pod parent alone for a few weeks until the pods become more mature. My digging methodology is quite purposeful although it may appear random.



Photo: Scott's Criterion

If you are growing seedlings, I would suggest digging your first year keepers prior to frost. In many instances they are planted more shallowly than established varieties, thus being more vulnerable to a hard freeze. Many seedling growers believe in splitting the first year clumps in two prior to storing away. This tends to lessen the probability of crown rot. A dip of all cut portions of all dahlia tubers into an anti-fungal agent helps prevent rot during storage. I use a Captan solution. Others find Benelate solution or household bleach mixed one to ten parts water effective in stopping rot or mold. Always be sure to allow your cut tubers time to cure after having divided and treated the cut portions. This should be done at storage temperature and will take 24 to 72 hours depending on relative humidity. What works well for me is dividing, curing and storing my tubers in my attached garage.

A quick note on marking tubers... The best device I've found is an indelible pencil called *A Bottle of Ink in a Pencil*. It produces ink-like marks on slightly moist tubers. We hope to have some of these available for sale at the October meeting.

It also makes sense to bring in your potroots prior to a killing frost. Just cut off the stalks even with the soil and pack up the pot, potting soil and root into storage boxes for safe keeping in your tuber storage location. Alternatively, potroots can be easily stored in nursery flats in your normal storage location and watered once a month. Tubers that have grown out of the drainage holes can be either left or removed. My experience has been if makes no difference. The only advantage of removal is tighter and neater packing of the storage boxes or flats.



Photo: Pooh, courtesy Clack's Dahlia Patch

FALL IN THE DAHLIA PATCH

By Max Ollieu

Autumn, my favorite time of the year... Weather is settled most of the time, days are still warm, nights cool, and dahlias blooming until a clear, cold night comes along to end the growing season. For those of us who choose to groom our plants for dahlia shows, the daily routine changes considerably after the last show. At least for me, other than deadheading, no more disbudding, no more pesticide application, no more leaf and lateral removal, etc. A great time to make even more bouquets for the house and visiting relatives and friends. Also a great time to focus on photography using the fall colors as background for different dahlia varieties. And, a great time to visit other dahlia gardens to see their varieties, settings, cultural approaches and to, of course, socialize. Where else can one find better friends than our fellow dahlia growers!!

Having said and experienced all the above, I'm also starting to prepare for the Big Dig. That means getting all soaker hoses rolled up and stored, removing extra stakes needed for support, and any other obstacles such as shade cloth and any structure that could be in the way. I also begin removing that percentage of dahlia varieties that didn't perform up to my satisfaction. Sometimes that is 100 percent, but usually 10-25 percent of the plants in a variety that I don't want to grow or have others grow. Each year, it seems I get a little more discriminating as to what qualifies to keep within a variety. My suspicion is that much of what I

discriminate against has virus as a driver. Probably just greater evidence of viral-related symptoms in particular plants within a variety. Already, my Edna C variety is down to one plant. Hopefully there will be enough tubers from that one plant to take cuttings next spring and get back to the number of plants I wish to grow.



Photo: Hollyhill Quintessence courtesy of Hollyhill Dahlias

Meanwhile, I am also covering the walkways between the rows in my garden with composted wood shavings and horse manure. That mulch along with the Big Leaf Maple leaves from three trees shading my lawn will completely cover the garden and walkways for the winter. By spring, earthworms will have consumed nearly all the mulch I am now applying and the weeds and grass will have been held mostly in check.

Killing frosts generally hit my garden after the second week of October. However, I don't wait for a killing frost to get started digging root clumps. Varieties I don't plan to keep are dug first and the most valuable last. Warm dry days are more of a problem early, so I risk dahlia varieties less valuable to me. My prized varieties get to grow until the tops are killed by a frost and the tubers are as developed as they can get. Wetter, cooler days later are better conditions for maintaining tuber quality while the root clumps are divided and dried prior to storage in vermiculite. It works best for me to dig about as many root clumps as I can process in one day. I dig, wash and label a variety before moving them into my garage for 1-2 days, then divide, dust with sulfur, let dry another day before placing in one gallon plastic bags with open tops with vermiculite just covering the tubers. Vermiculite is dampened with ¼ cup of water to one gallon of vermiculite. The gallon bags are stored in plastic crates which hold 12-20 bags, depending on size. Most of my dividing is done after dark with the music turned up.

Before the society meetings in October and November, I select healthy root clumps of varieties that can be sold as

fundraisers at the meetings. It's an easy way to dispose of surplus root clumps without having to divide them. I encourage others to support our society by taking a few of their surplus root clumps to those meeting as well.

Happy digging!!

ON LINE INFORMATION

The American Dahlia Society maintains a website at <http://www.dahlia.org> which provides lots of useful information and links. If you have a computer and enjoy learning more about dahlias this is a great resource. On the ADS website there are links to joining e-mail newsgroups-bulletin boards like the dahlia- net and dahlia- creating.

The Pacific Northwest Dahlia Conference has a web site located at <http://pnecdahlia.com/index.html> Here you will find lots of eye-popping dahlia photographs as well as information about the PNDC and its member dahlia clubs.

All judges please note that the annual judging report can be downloaded and printed off from the PNDC website. Please be sure to complete and send to Wayne and Eleanor Shantz prior to the end of October.

The Portland Dahlia Society's own website is at <http://portlanddahlia.com> Here you will find more information about our club's history, pictorial tours of the Canby Trial Garden, tour a member's garden and see many great dahlia photographs. Both the Portland and the PNDC website are created and maintained by our own Ted Kennedy. Thanks Ted for all you do.



Photo courtesy of Hollyhill Dahlias