

# Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

September Meeting at Swan Island Dahlias, 995 NW 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue; Canby, OR 97013

**Club Website: [Portlanddahlia.com](http://Portlanddahlia.com)**

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**Next meeting Tuesday, September 8th, 2015 @ 4:00 PM**

## PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER

Our program for September will be a reprise of last year's highly rated gathering at Swan Island Dahlias. We realize that work schedules may limit some member's arrival times. It is perfectly acceptable to join in when ever your schedule or inclination allows.

We will start at 4:00 PM with a tour of the gardens and an opportunity to judge seedlings at our ADS sanctioned trial garden. This is an easy way for judges to fulfill their annual requirement for trial garden judging. Senior judges will be available to work in teams with those just starting out.

At about 5:30 we will have dinner. Please bring a pot-luck dish of your own to share along with a serving spoon. The Society will provide soft drinks, paper plates and plastic utensils.

Nicholas Gitts has agreed to be on hand to answer any dahlia related questions. And we plan to have an arrangement demonstration as well.



**Salmon Rays**

## TENDING THE TRIAL GARDEN

by Ted J. Kennedy

Another year, and another trial garden. This is our second year tending the garden without our dear friend Bill Mishler. He was so good at taking care of the trial garden that we replaced him with four people. Last year I wrote an article about how interesting it was to tend the trial garden while the Swan Island Dahlia Festival was going on. And as usual this year there have been several interesting interactions with the tourists. Usually, the people are there to see what dahlias look like and know little about them. This year a family decided to go to the West Coast for their vacation all the way from Georgia. They related the story of how their father had grown dahlias for 40 years and wanted to see what they looked like in Oregon. We talked for several minutes and far exceeded the 10 year old children's attention span.



**Skipley Spot**

When you are at the trial garden you will generally see several photographers who vary from the cell phone picture takers to the sophisticated professionals with tripods and exotic lenses. I have had conversations with many of those and have learned that there is more to close up photography than one would ever imagine.

And then there are the artists. I talked to one who was using watercolors to paint the rows of dahlias with all the different colors. But the most common tourists I see are people who bring an elderly relative to the gardens. There is nothing like dahlias to bring back good memories. And here is the article I wrote last year about working at the trial gardens:

Went to the Canby Trial garden to deadhead and disbud yesterday. It is located on the Swan Island Dahlia farm and their Dahlia Festival is going on this last weekend and the next. I had to park a quarter of a mile away and was guided into my parking spot by the numerous parking attendants (local high school kids). I walked from my truck through the parking lot, by the barn full of tractors (city folk like to see tractors), by the Kettle Corn stand, by the hamburger stand (the \$6.99 Dahlia burger was the most expensive item), past the gigantic flower sales booths (one was not enough for the festival), past the root cellar entrance that is boringly full of boxes of tubers in the Winter). The root cellar is now full of (hundreds) baskets and displays of dahlias all done by paid florists. I finally made it past all the other booths too. And I rounded the corner and went past the greenhouse where Marge Gitts grows her Ponderosa (that means grapefruit sized) lemons. Oh, and the live band music was being played on the loud speakers (at a low volume as this is a flower farm after all). At last, I am at the trial garden where I can get to work. But I forgot to get a bucket in which to put the spent flowers. I retraced my steps to the flower sales stands and procured a suitable bucket. I went back to the trial garden and proceeded to remove the "over the hill" blooms while people gasped that I was being so callous with these glorious flowers. Several people started reaching into the bucket while asking whether they could have a blossom. Eventually, I felt like swatting their hands like one would do with pesky flies but thought better of that.

So, I spent 30 minutes of actual work and 2 more hours of endless questions and answers. Most visitors have a very basic knowledge of dahlias (they are pretty sure they are flowers). Nearly 40% of them had no idea that they grow from tubers (I say potatoes are tubers too but sadly many visitors had no idea that potatoes grow underground too). Usually at these affairs, one meets at least one very knowledgeable person with a scientific background and we engage in the specifics of dahlia genetics. Not today. Nearly all my discussions of dahlia breeding this day were at the level of "bees gather pollen and place it on the flower and it makes some seeds". And they say then, "Oh, so you grow these dahlias from seeds." And they are then amazed that dahlias make tubers.

The poor Swan Island Dahlia people must be rather used

to these questions. And the most common question of all is "Do I have to dig my dahlias every year?" and then they "brag" how they have left them in the ground for several years (in most years recently they have not frozen in the ground here in Portland). And then they ask how do you divide those clumps now they have grown to "Volkswagen Beetle"(my words this time) sized clumps. And of course our answer of "dig them every year" is not what they want hear and I explain how to use axes and chainsaws to divide these clumps.

And people are from all over the place. One lady determined that we grew up 6 blocks away in Walla Walla. And we went through that long list of names of people that people give out in such situations to see if you "knew them". I knew nobody (Walla Walla had 25,000 people in those days!). But we knew lots of places and agreed that the best place in town to get burger was the "Iceberg Drive In".

The lady from Alaska by the way knew that she had to dig her tubers



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## SHOW FLYER

Lastly, attached to this same email is a flyer for our 2015 show at the Clackamas County Fairgrounds. Please print off as many as you would like to place at your neighborhood food store's community activity board, permissible posting spots at your work, or anyplace you think the general public would enjoy knowing about our free to the public event. Special thanks to Larry Smith for designing the flyer.