

# Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

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

Website: [portlanddahlia.com](http://portlanddahlia.com)

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**Next meeting Tuesday, March 10th, 2015 @ 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 28th, and the second on Saturday, April 25th. The second one will be to prepare tubers for the Master Gardener's Sale. Starting time for both workshops is 10:00 AM. Please help out at one or both if you can. We need your tubers and assistance. Also please see Shirley to volunteer to help set up the sales area for the April Sale and Auction.

## SILENT AUCTION

If you have tubers of *newer* varieties that are ready to be auctioned, we will be using the silent auction format in March. The donors have the right to set what they consider to be a fair minimum or reserve bid. If there are no bids above the minimum, the donor takes his donation back home. 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

Daniel Compagna and Mike Riordan will be providing cookies for the March meeting.

## MARCH PROGRAM

We will have a presentation on taking cuttings, starting tubers and first year seedlings. We will have plant labels and germination mix available for sale. The germination mix is \$18.00 per bale and the plant labels are \$2.50 per hundred. Please pre-order the planting mix through Ted Kennedy 503-655-6951 or [e4449@aol.com](mailto:e4449@aol.com)

## 2015 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: \$24.00	Individual \$10.00
Couples: \$10.00	Family: \$27.00	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 powdered cinnamon, 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.

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. Most soils in the PNW tend to be on the acid side. Applying lime, either regular calcium carbonate or dolomite, will help bring your soil back to neutral. This aids in the plants ability to photosynthesize and process soil nutrients. John Menzel once told me he thought the reason Australian growers had fewer problems wintering "hard to keep varieties" is because the Australian soils are naturally more alkaline. Most soil tests require at least a cup and a half of soil collected in a zip lock bag. It is advisable to take this sample from several different places in your garden to get an accurate representative sample. Try to keep the sample as sterile as possible by using very clean implements and wearing latex gloves. A&L Laboratories is a resource for soil tests. See their web site at <http://www.al-labs-west.com/sections/anservices/soil/fees>

### **FREE SOIL TESTS**

Please mark the date, Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am until noon. The Clackamas County Master Gardeners will be offering free soil tests as a part of their garden discovery day at the Milwaukie Center, 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie. Follow this link for more details <http://www.cmastergardeners.org/10-Minute%20University/documents/2014TestingSoilpH.pdf>

### **FEDERATION SPRING WORKSHOP**

The Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers will hold their Spring Workshop at the Mt. Vernon Senior Center on Saturday, March 21st. There is no cost to this event and most participants bring a brown bag lunch. Presentations on varied aspects of dahlia growing are provided throughout the day. Contact Teresa Bergman (360)274-8192 or Jeanette Benson (503) 649-4118 for more information and to coordinate car pool arrangements.

### **PNDC SPRING MEETING**

The Portland Dahlia Society would like to cordially invite members, their guests and dahlia friends to the Spring PNDC Meeting and Luncheon to be held at Parker's Restaurant in Castle Rock, Washington. We have set the date of Saturday, April 18th. Parker's is located at 1300 Mt St Helens Way NE, Castle Rock, WA 98611. From I-5 take exit 49 and head east past the Shell Station and strip mall. The restaurant is on the right, about a quarter mile after exiting the freeway. Parker's phone number is 360-967-2263. We will be able to order

off the menu, so we can have what we each most prefer. There will also be beverage and dessert choices. Everyone will pay individually at the restaurant on April 18<sup>th</sup>. We are again indebted to Teresa Bergman for handling all the luncheon arrangements. Thanks so much, Teresa!

This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and network with the top originators, growers and exhibitors in the PNW and British Columbia. The most exciting part is the tuber and plant auction which begins after lunch. Many growers bring their newest and best introductions and/or imports. The bidding is spirited and entertaining. Membership in the PNDC is not required to attend any portion of this event.



*Hollyhill Bill Mishler, 2015 Flower of the Year*

### **TUBER SALE FLYER**

Included in this mailing is a flyer for our sale and auction April 14<sup>th</sup>. 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.

### **STARTING TUBERS INDOORS**

Many growers prefer to start their tubers indoors ahead of planting time. This gives the plants a head start and results in earlier flowers in the garden. An added bonus is that there are extra sprouts available for taking cuttings and thus having additional stock for planting, trading or making pot roots.

Many growers have a set up of stacked plastic or wire rack shelving in their basement or spare room. Suspended above the shelves are fluorescent light fixtures. The multiple shelf set up yields some bottom heat from the light fixture on the lower shelf. Regular

shop lights work just fine. There is no advantage to using the more expensive “grow” lights. I leave my set up on 12 hours a day and the plants grow just fine.

How soon should we start the tubers in pots indoors? Most growers think that four to six weeks is just about right. If you were planting mid to late May, starting your tubers about the first of April would yield 8” plants to set out at planting time.



**Scott's Criterion M C DP**

If you want to experiment on a smaller scale, you can start just a few plants on a sunny window sill. Or better yet put a few pots out on a sunny patio or deck and bring them in on a nightly basis.

As the plants increase in growth, you may want to begin hardening some of the plants off. This involves leaving them outside in a sunny, yet protected area. I have a south facing deck that works great. By late April or early May they can be left out all day and night. Be watchful of a late frost and be prepared to move inside at night if necessary.

## **TIME TESTED TIPS ON GROWING DAHLIAS BY Gary Murphy**

As I begin my 38<sup>th</sup> year of growing our favorite flower, I'd like to pass along some tips and methods that have benefited me over these many years. I'll take credit for some of these methods but others have come from past and present dahlia growing friends.

The land that I cultivate was originally a strawberry farm. That said, I have diligently worked to improve and amend the soil over the years. I maintain a compost pile which is broken down every 2 to 3 years, sifted through a wire screen, and added to the dahlia and vegetable gardens. I am currently experimenting with a European composting method. This consists of digging a trench as

long and as wide as needed which is from 10-12” deep. Compostable materials are added to the trench to a depth of 3-4” then covered with the extracted soil. This method is best used during the late fall and winter months to allow the composted materials to break down (6-8 weeks) in time to be tilled in for spring dahlia/vegetable plantings. I also maintain some cover crops, use leaf mold etc. which augments the composting. As spring approaches I hand broadcast organic granulated lime over my beds (as of this writing I have completed this task).

Living in Troutdale (the Gateway to the Columbia River Gorge) I learned long ago that wooden stakes (which become infected with rot over time) don't stand up to the strong east winds, so all my dahlias are tied to 6' steel fence posts. I tie the plants with green twisted jute garden twine, and when the plants are 4-5' tall, polypropylene baler twine is used for additional support.

At planting: I till my beds as soon as the soil can be worked, being careful not to do so if the soil is too wet which results in dirt clods which means harder work later. Prior to planting I hand broadcast a 10-20-20 granular fertilizer which is then tilled into the soil. When I started growing it was the stated norm to add a tablespoon or so of bone meal to the planting hole. Over time I have used bone meal, alfalfa pellets, Osmocote, even bat guano! By taking advantage of compost as well as the granular fertilizer I do not add any further amendments when I plant. If the weather is quite warm at planting, tubers with an established root structure are covered with a thin layer of compost or potting soil and lightly watered, though growers are admonished not to water when planting dahlia tubers, it is my experience that this gives an additional growth boost to these particular plants. I plant somewhat shallow (5-6” deep) and then mound soil around the plant as growth progresses. Additional fertilizing is done when the plants are 18” – 2ft. in height and at the time buds appear. I use a water soluble fertilizer such as Jack's (Peter's) 10-30-20 or Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster 10-52-10 and foliar feed...I do not typically feed again during the growing season.

Critter/Bug Control: I bait for snails/slugs very early (bait has been out in the beds since early January) and often and, hopefully, our rough winter will result in reduced numbers of these pests. After the dahlia plants are up and growing well applications of Sluggo or Dead Line are utilized. I try not to apply insecticides unless infestation of a common pest is wide spread...organic solutions are preferred over systemic insecticides. However, during hot weather, it is imperative to be watchful for red spider mites and take eradication methods early and often.



**Hollyhill Goldrush BB SC LB**

A few more personal quirks: I try to begin planting around May 15<sup>th</sup> and strive to finish by the end of May. As I plant I then place a wooden stake (fashioned from wood kindling) 12-16" long next to the green sprout on the tuber. This stake provides a means of locating the sprout should the plant not show through the soil after a reasonable period of time and it is necessary to dig down to inspect the condition of the tuber. As the growing plants break through the soil, I place plastic soft drink cups (bottom end removed) over each new plant as this provides protection against slugs, wind and two/four footed critters. I remove the cup when the plant has grown slightly above the top rim of the cup. Lastly, as I fashion myself to be a somewhat "organized grower" I've devised a method for identifying plants that have been pinched back or stopped and those that have not. I use a colored sharpie pen and make a circle on the identification tag which helps me to locating plants that I may have missed pinching back...this begets the fact that I may not be as organized as I lead myself to believe.



**Hollyhill Cotton Candy B IC DP**

I hope the foregoing information is helpful particularly to new and less experienced growers. Remember that it is most important to share our experiences with others and to help our fellow dahlia enthusiasts become successful in their dahlia endeavors. If you are a new grower do not hesitate to ask more experienced and seasoned growers for help and guidance as promoting the dahlia and its successful cultivation is one of the mainstays of our society. Most importantly, as Wayne Shantz of the Lane County DS has always pointed out, it is the friendships that are borne out of our dahlia associations that matter most. Best wishes for a very successful 2015 growing season!



**Hollyhill Geisha M C Pk**