

Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

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

Website: portlanddahlia.com

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Next meeting Tuesday, March 14th, 2017 @ 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 Sunday, April 9th, and the second on Sunday, April 30th. The second one will be to prepare tubers for the Master Gardener's Sale. Starting time for both workshops is 1:00 PM. 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

Nathan Payne and Shirley Bankston will be bringing treats.

MARCH PROGRAM

At the March 14 meeting Eric Toedtli and Mark Oldenkamp will show how they give tubers a head start in growing and how they take cuttings in order to create several plants from just one tuber. If you would like to try your hand at this, they will have some supplies ready for you. They will also discuss storing and starting some

of the more difficult to store/start tubers and how dividing can be done if not accomplished in the fall.

Additionally, Mike Riordan and Ted Kennedy will demonstrate their methods for starting dahlias from seeds.

Calling all who have dahlia seed! In an effort to challenge dahlia growers to try growing dahlias from seed (who knows what you will get??!), we are asking that you donate some seed to be distributed to members at the March 14 meeting. There will be an opportunity to bring in the dahlias grown from this seed to the October 10 meeting. Thanks in advance for your generosity.

Co-Vice Presidents Laura Oldenkamp and Nan Hage would like to publish an amazing method or two for slug/snail control. We think there may be a few interesting stories to tell. Send your slug/snail control methods to Laura at dahliafan1957@gmail.com. Of course, handouts are available at the meeting giving the best scientifically vetted methods.

Don't forget to check your tubers for rot during storage. When sorting tubers and making plans for your dahlia garden please keep in mind that the Portland Dahlia Society appreciates your donations of spare dahlia tubers. We expect sales to be brisk at our upcoming sale at our meeting site on April 11 and at the Spring Garden Fair in Canby on May 6-7. Metro area gardeners may have experienced a higher than normal loss of dahlias due to the harsh weather, so please be generous with donations of tubers. Tuber packing for these fundraising events will be held at Swan Island Dahlias in Canby on Sun. April 9 and Sun. April 30, 1-4 both days.

2017 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 Couples: \$10.00 Juniors: \$1.00	Individual: \$24.00 Family: \$27.00	Individual \$10.00 Dual: \$15.00
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. Free soil tests are available Saturday, March 4th courtesy of the Clackamas Co. Master Gardeners at 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie. Time is 9 to 11:30 AM. Master Gardener Ten Minute University courses also ongoing throughout the morning.

FEDERATION SPRING WORKSHOP

The Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers will hold their Spring Workshop at the Faith Lutheran Church in Seattle on Saturday, March 18th. 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, WA on Saturday, April 22nd. Parker's address is 1300 Mt. St. Helens Way, Castle Rock, WA 98611. The general meeting will begin at noon, with the delegates convening at 11:00AM. 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 22nd.

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 but if you attend, please plan to have lunch with us so we can meet our required food service minimum.

TUBER SALE FLYER

Included in this mailing is a flyer for our sale and auction April 11th. 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.

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.

DAHLIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BY TED J. KENNEDY

What is the number one pest of dahlias? In our wet climate, our biggest pest problem is slugs and to a smaller extent snails. It is very common for slugs to eat all of the sprouts emerging from the soil and the dahlia tuber may never recover. If you till your soil while it is too wet and create dirt clods, the slugs will crawl into the spaces between the clods and remain there eating dahlia sprouts. There are two product types that people use to control slugs and one is somewhat organic called Sluggo or other products using iron phosphate. The active ingredient, iron phosphate is not poisonous to human or animals and it even used to be sold in health food stores as a supplement. However, there is some controversy over the product as they have added a chemical called EDTA to enhance the effects of the iron phosphate. The other, old fashioned products are slug bait pellets, meal and liquid that are metaldehyde based. I am not an advocate of the pellets or

meal but do use the liquid products (one is called Deadline) in my garden. Using the liquid sparingly by placing a thin line of the product around the dahlia plant will protect it from slug damage for a week or two. Once dahlias are up to about 12 inches tall, slugs do not seem to be a problem any longer. There are hundreds of other ways to control slugs but in my experience none of them are as effective as the two products above.

What is the biggest fertilizer related problem affecting dahlias?

Besides the obvious answer that dahlias need some fertilizer to grow, here in our area the biggest problem is acid soils. Dahlias grow best in slightly acid soils and the ideal pH is 6.3 although they do very well in a range from 6.0 to 6.5. Our native soils tend to be about 6.0 in pH and that is fine for dahlias. However, as you grow plants in your garden and fertilize the plants, the soil will become more acid. After a few years the acid will build up and the dahlia plants will not be able to take up the fertilizer easily and many people will increase the amount of fertilizer. With the increase of fertilizer the soil will become even more acid until dahlias do very poorly there no matter how much fertilizer is applied.

The answer to the acid problem is to check the soil pH with a pH meter (our club has one you can borrow) and if it is not in the proper range, to add lime to your soil. Lime is an organic product and is ground limestone (the Rocky Mountains are mostly limestone). Lime can be applied in early Spring and the newer “prilled” lime products can be applied with your fertilizer spreader. Many commercial growers add some lime to their gardens every year. By the way, if you know your garden is deficient in magnesium (that is most of us), you can use dolomite lime that adds magnesium and corrects the pH too.



Hollyhill Dr. Rick BB IC DR